ISSUE 169 | AUGUST 2009

DUNGEON®

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT

ISSUE NO. 169

CONTENTS

4 HALL OF THE SNAKE GOD

By Robert J. Schwalb

Legends of the Serpent Wood speak of an ancient group of primitive humans who dedicated themselves to the dark god Zehir. Several of the temples they raised still stand in the wild lands, and one such place has become home to new dangers. This Side Trek makes for an excellent respite between adventures, or can be used as a springboard for a larger adventure series against the forces of Zehir. A Side Trek for 11th-level PCs.

10 STORMCROW TOR

By Bruce R. Cordell

Stormcrow Company—an unsavory band of adventurers—haven't been seen or heard from in years. Rumors of their accumulated wealth have spread far and wide, and if they have truly been slain, that treasure is just waiting for adventurers to come and collect it. But is anything ever as easy as it seems? An adventure for 4th-level PCs.

29 OASIS OF THE GOLDEN PEACOCK

By Tim Eagon

A desert oasis once revered by a group of avian-friendly druids holds a secret well of power. Now, a power-mad sorcerer seeks to tap the essence of the oasis for her own abuses. The PCs must act quickly to secure the oasis from this villain and her band of eladrin bandits. An adventure for 7th-level PCs.

63 DUNGEON DELVE: CROWN OF THE TROLL KING

By Daniel Marthaler

A troll who styles himself king has acquired an artifact that allows him to capture the souls of his defeated foes. Do your PCs dare brave his lair to defeat him and retrieve this foul device? A Dungeon Delve adventure for 11th-level PCs.

72 CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP: THE BLASPHEMER

By James Wyatt

The depraved villain of James Wyatt's Draconic Prophecy series of Eberron novels is brought to life for use in your D&D campaign.

ON THE COVER
Illustration by Zoltan Boros & Gabor Szikszai

3 EDITORIAL

75 RULING SKILL CHALLENGES

By Mike Mearls

Mike continues to educate on the nature of skill challenges, with unique applications and examples.

78 SAVE MY GAME

By Stephen Radney-MacFarland

A DM's best friend? Stephen Radney-MacFarland, back with more advice and letters from the mailbag.

82 DUNGEONCRAFT

By James Wyatt

James discusses the latest changes to his fledgling campaign.

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DUNGEON

169

DUNGEON August 2009

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iPhone Angst

Even though D&D is still a tabletop game at its core, the game is now firmly entrenched in the modern trappings—and perils—of technology. The message boards, hordes of fan-generated software, and ultimately D&D Insider have seen to that. But in the past couple of years, one particular device has become a bane and boon to D&D games everywhere: the iPhone.

Certainly, laptops preceded iPhones to many game tables. I know several players who've brought their characters on laptops, and used them to track their hit points and power usage, and store their campaign notes. And of course cell phones have been in everyone's pockets for almost as long. But there's something about the iPhone...

It's near-ubiquitous, for one. I know many people who own iPhones but who don't own laptops. And then there are the apps. Cool apps have become so accessible for gamers, and they're mostly so cheap that few people who own iPhones, in my experience, haven't indulged themselves with one or two. Or fifty.

But mostly, it's just that they're cool. Full disclosure: I don't own one, but I wish I did (stupid two-year contract). And most people I know who don't have one also wish they did. They're handy, they're fun, and yes, they can do so much cool stuff out of the box that they can turn into a bigger time suck than Techmobowl was for 12-year-old boys in 1987. With something so snazzy and now so common, DMs have to find ways to deal with iPhones at the table. Some have just banned them outright, adding them to the list with cell phones, portable TVs, and durian (or maybe that's just me).

As with any tool, iPhones can be used for good or evil. I've thoughtfully attached a list in each category, so maybe you DMs can rethink those blanket bans you may have already put in place.

The Good

• Settling Debates: iPhones allow you to quickly and easily access information. Sometimes you're not near a computer or a wireless network when you really want to access, say, IMDB to quickly settle those movie quote debates that have derailed many a D&D session. For something like this, nothing is handier than an iPhone. Look it up, move along.

• Music. Sometimes, such as around our office, you're playing D&D and just hankering for someone to fire up the Conan the Barbarian soundtrack to accompany your current battle. But there's not a stereo or iPod dock in sight. Sure, the speakers on the iPhone are tiny, but sometimes any music is better than none.

• Character Sheets: We don't currently offer our own iPhone apps, but there are a couple cool ones that let you import your Character Builder data into an iPhone readable character sheet. The site www.iplay4e.com has an app that people around the office use, for example.

• Twitter: I save this one for last because you'll see it on the next list as well. Lots of folks I know twitter during games to post updates to events as they unfold. Done in moderation, I think that's pretty cool. In excess? See below.

The Bad

• Starting Debates: The curse of having so much information at one's fingertips makes some feel like the authority on everything from hot wings to hot air balloons. So if someone at the table engages in any sort of harmless speculation, some iPhoners bust out I'mrightandyou'rewrong.com just to prove a point. That crashing sound you just heard was your session jumping the tracks.

• Youtube: I love a funny video as much as the next guy. And I love some in-game movie quotes even more. What I don't love? Someone busting out the movie clip for the movie just quoted. It's overkill, it's distracting, and it's not welcome, thank you very much.

• Twitter: Here it is, back for round two. Twittering during the exciting moments of a game: Cool. Twittering your life as it unfolds: Lame. Has celebrity Twitteritis taught us nothing? I'm sorry, but no one's life is that interesting. Not to mention, doing so during the game is just less attention paid to the game and your fellow players. That leads me to...

• "It's My Turn Already?": And last, but certainly not least, the iPhone can be a never-ending source of one distraction after another. I mean, it's the Interwebs. Of course there's stuff to do, games to play, and message boards to lurk (or troll). Take comfort: Those players who have their eyes glued to their iPhones, oblivious to the world around them, will be the first to fall when the zombie apocalypse happens.

What it all boils down to is, as with everything, iPhones are best in moderation. In the case of this particular piece of technology, a little goes a long way, but the benefits can definitely outweigh the negatives if you set up some easy ground rules. Have a favorite iPhone app or iPhone horror story? Let us hear about it at dndinsider@wizards.com. We'd love to hear from you!

HEROIC
1-10

A Side Trek for 10th-Level Characters

By Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Rick Hershey, Empty Rooms Studios

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Hall of the Snake God

Old legends and dubious tales abound about the Serpent Wood. Spoken over mugs of ale, these stories about snake gods, shadowy serpents, and vile thralls describe how they all once capered in the gloom cast by the tall trees.

Generations have passed since the days when the strange folk ruled the forest, but even now, centuries later, few dare tread its darkened trails for fear of disturbing the restless ghosts and drawing the attention of terrible predators. Rangers and other woodsy folk lend credence to these fears by whispering about moss-covered ruins where old stones jut up from the loamy earth and serve as mute reminders of a lost and ancient society. One can only wonder what might still remain behind for an intrepid adventure with more courage than sense to unearth and bring into the light.

"Hall of the Snake God" is a short Side Trek designed for five characters of between 10th and 12th level. Consisting of just two encounters, you can run this scenario to bridge two larger adventures together or as an adventure played in a single night.

Adventure Background

The rumors surrounding the Serpent Wood are true: Primitive humans did raise a city in the trees' shelter. They dedicated their society to Zehir, the serpent god, but their nation didn't thrive long. Decadence, overindulgence, and treachery were the hallmarks of their undoing. The few weathered stones, many marked with strange runes, remain in full view, but secret places, such as rooms and structures buried beneath the forest floor, are hidden and forgotten by all but the strange inhabitants set to guard them.

While traveling the forest, the adventurers discover one such site. After confronting an ettin and its pet owlbear, the PCs discover a locked, soot-darkened bronze door that vines have nearly overgrown. Beyond the door, they find a long staircase descending into darkness.

At the bottom, the stairs open onto a crude chamber that the people who ruled the forest above excavated long ago, and in it stands a strange portal that links this world to another beyond it. To prevent mortal passage through the shimmering portal, an ancient naga protects the gate with the added might of an eidolon and a sea of serpents.

Involving the PCs

Any of the following adventure hooks are suitable for involving the adventurers in the adventure.

Buried Treasure: A strange discovery during a previous adventure leads the characters to the Hall of the Snake God. Painted on an old swatch of snake skin is a map, likely found amid other treasure or tucked away inside an old scroll tube. Scrutinizing the map reveals a few familiar landmarks, which allows the characters to follow the map to what can only be treasure and glory.

Fresh Sacrifice: The people of Sedgewen, a small settlement on the Serpent Wood's fringes, descend from those primitive snake worshipers. Believing their god to still live in the forest, they lure adventurers into the woods, promising great treasure or imperiled innocents awaiting rescue. The wicked villages hope their master will accept the adventurers as a worthy sacrifice.

Marauding Ettin: A tiny community huddled on the Serpent Wood's outer edge came under attack from a marauding ettin. At first the raids claimed livestock, but the ettin is becoming more daring and has snatched a few villagers. The villagers beg the heroes for help as they pass through the area.

Starting the Side Trek

Winter has fallen on the Serpent Wood, and bare trees claw at a leaden sky, doing little to stop the snow from blanketing the forest floor. Travel through the woods is slow-going due to the snow covering the uneven terrain, iced-over streams and pools, and the occasional sinkhole, but care and caution allow the characters to move without harm.

If the characters track the ettin, they find its trail easily since the creature, overly confident, did little to conceal its path. In fact, if the PCs are trying to rescue a captured villager, they might spy half-eaten body parts and bloody bones discarded in the snow. The ettin requires a great deal of food, and not much game remains in the forest.

When the PCs can see the cave, read:

Through the dense trees, you spot bright light emanating from a cave mouth set in the side of a low-rising hill. A few dead trees still stand before the opening, and boulders thrust up through the snow.

General Details

The cave and the hall beyond are rough-hewn and crude. The walls throughout the area have cave paintings that display serpents, snake-folk, and a shadowy snake figure depicting Zehir. A DC 15 Religion check identifies the shadowy figure as such.

Portal: A shimmering curtain glimmers in a small chamber adjoining the larger room. The portal's destination is a barren chasm on Tytherion, the Endless Night, though indigo light shining from the portal conceals the destination and makes the portal opaque. The portal is a one-way portal, so characters passing through it have to find another way back to the mortal world.

Stairs: Steep stairs connect the cave to the chamber below. They descend 100 feet beyond the locked door and open onto a wide shelf overlooking the room. The stairs count as difficult terrain.

Treasure

Considering the Side Trek's scope, adventurers should gain at most two parcels of treasure. If you're using this adventure to link two others, you might move one or two parcels the PCs missed during the last adventure here or pull two parcels from the next adventure to give them a bit of an edge for the scenario to come. For the two parcels, one should be coins and goods, while the second should be a magic item drawn from the players' wish lists. This Side Trek grants parcel 3 and parcel 8 from the 12th-level list (*Dungeon Master's Guide*®, page 127). Parcel 8 is divided between both encounters. Modify the treasure as needed for your party's level.

Bright Cave

Encounter Level 11 (3,000 XP)

Setup

1 ettin marauder (M)
1 winterclaw owlbear (W)

An ettin marauder and pet owlbear huddle in the cave near the fire to chase away the cold.

When the PCs see into the cave, read:
A roaring fire burns in the room's middle, revealing a hulking two-headed giant and the largest owlbear you've likely ever seen.

Tactics

The ettin makes a *club* attack and spends its action point to attack again. The owlbear uses *frost wail* on its first turn if it can do so without catching the ettin. It then engages the closest enemy to use *double attack* each round.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The campfire fills the cave with bright light.

Locked Door: Clearing the overgrowth away and wiping off the soot reveals a locked bronze door featuring snake imagery. Opening the door requires a DC 21 Strength check or a DC 20 Thievery check.

Boulders: It costs 3 squares of movement to move through a boulder's space. The boulders provide cover.

Ettin Marauder (M) **Level 10 Elite Soldier**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 1,000
Initiative +8; see also *double actions* **Senses** Perception +12
HP 222; **Bloodied** 111
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

↯ **Swat** (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves into a position that flanks the ettin; at-will)
The ettin targets one creature flanking it: +13 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 3 squares.

Double Actions
An ettin rolls initiative twice, gets two turns during a round, and has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. Each set of actions corresponds to a different head. The ettin's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each of its turns.

Dual Brains
At the end of its turn, the ettin automatically saves against the dazed and stunned conditions and against charm effects that a save can end.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Str 28 (+14) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 23 (+11) **Int** 8 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+4)
Equipment hide armor, 2 clubs

Trees: A tree has AC 4; Fortitude 10, Reflex 4; hp 25. Reducing a tree to 0 hit points causes it to fall away from the attacker, and it attacks any adjacent creature in its 2-square path: +12 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Treasure: The ettin has a filthy cloth bag filled with 500 gp.

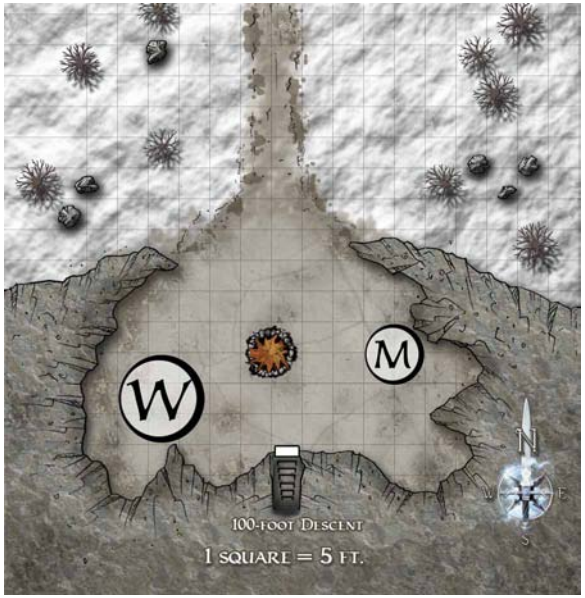
Winterclaw Owlbear (W) **Level 14 Elite Controller**
Huge fey beast XP 2,000
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +15; low-light vision
HP 280; **Bloodied** 140; see also *frost wail*
AC 28; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7 (ice walk)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Winterclaw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 3; +18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage plus 1d8 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

↯ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
The winterclaw owlbear makes two winterclaw attacks. If both claws hit the same target, the target is immobilized (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed (save ends).

↯ **Frost Wail** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Cold**
Close burst 3; +16 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 5 cold damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 24 (+14) **Dex** 14 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+10)
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 2 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+8)



Portal Room

Encounter Level 12 (3,500 XP)

Setup

1 eidolon (E)
1 guardian naga (G)
2 tangler snake swarms (S)

A guardian naga watches over this chamber to prevent access to the portal. The original architects constructed the eidolon, also in this room, to honor the gods dwelling beyond the shimmering gate.

When the PCs can see into the room, read:
A deep cavern stretches before you, supported by two rock curtains to either side. At the end stands a crude hulking statue carved to depict a humanoid, but graven with runes. A great serpent with a humanlike head uncoils from around its legs and slithers across the floor, while purple light emanating from a bright alcove dapples its scales with its every sinuous movement. Finally, the floor drops away in the room's center to a pit in which you can see writhing serpents.

Perception Check
DC 18: *You hear hissing noises emerging from the shadowed tunnels formed by the rocky curtains.*

Tactics

The guardian naga positions itself so that the pit stands between itself and the PCs. It begins the combat using *thunderstrike* against the largest cluster of PCs, preferably catching controllers and ranged strikers in the burst. While waiting for the power to recharge, it uses *word of pain* against any characters descending the cliff or against those who fall into the pit. If any PC enters a space adjacent to the naga, the naga uses *tail slap* to knock the character into the pit, or *spit poison* if faced by several foes at the same time.

The eidolon enters its *hallowed stance* on the first round and stays in it until a character comes within its reach, at which point it makes a bull rush attack to knock an enemy into the pit. While at least one enemy is in the pit, it slams another enemy if one is in reach or re-enters its *hallowed stance*.

Eidolon (E) **Level 13 Controller (Leader)**
Large natural animate (construct) XP 800

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +9
Fearless Followers aura 5; each ally within the aura is immune to fear.
HP 132; **Bloodied** 66
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 23
Immune disease, fear, sleep
Speed 5

Slam (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.

Divine Retribution (immediate reaction, when an enemy attacks the eidolon while *hallowed stance* is active; at-will) ✦ **Radiant**
Divine radiance strikes the creature that attacked the eidolon; ranged 20; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 radiant damage. *Miss:* Half damage. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Vengeful Flames (immediate reaction, when an enemy kills one of the eidolon's allies in the eidolon's line of sight; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Divine fire engulfs the enemy: ranged 20; +17 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Hallowed Stance (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant**
The eidolon assumes a meditative stance. Until the end of its next turn, the eidolon gains resist 20 to all damage, and all allies in its line of sight deal 1d8 extra radiant damage on their melee attacks. If the eidolon moves, the effect ends.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+6)

Guardian Naga (G) **Level 12 Elite Artillery**
Large immortal magical beast (reptile) XP 1,400

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 186; **Bloodied** 93
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Tail Slap (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Word of Pain (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 20; +17 vs. Will; 2d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Spit Poison (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3; +15 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 2 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage, a -2 penalty to Fortitude, and a -2 penalty to saving throws (save ends all).

Thunderstrike (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Thunder**
Area burst 1 within 20; +16 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is not dazed.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Supernal
Skills Arcana +15, History +15, Insight +13
Str 16 (+9) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 18 (+10) **Cha** 12 (+7)

2 Tangler Snake Swarms (S) **Level 9 Brute**
Large natural beast (reptile, swarm) XP 400 each

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
Tangling Serpents aura 1; an enemy that starts its turn in the aura cannot shift on its turn, and an enemy that starts its turn in the snake swarm's space takes 5 damage.
HP 117; **Bloodied** 58
AC 21; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 19
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 5 against close and area attacks
Speed 6, climb 4, swim 4

Bite (standard; at-will)
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the tangler snake swarm shifts 1 square into the target's space.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 8 (+3)

The tangler snake swarms (not to be confused with the vicious vipers in the pit) delay their actions until the end of the round or until an enemy enters their corridors. If by the end of the round, no PC has entered their lines of sight, they emerge and close on PCs still on the shelves or target any characters that loiter in the back. If possible, they slide PCs into the pit or off the shelf for additional damage.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The portal sheds bright light in a 10-square radius.

Ceiling: Over the northern ledge, the ceiling is 10 feet high. It is 30 feet above the main area, and 50 feet over the pit.

Walls: Holes dimple the walls near the floor. Mice, insects, and other critters sometimes emerge, allowing the snakes to sustain themselves, though the latter creatures can slip out of the room to hunt when food is scarce.

Ledge: The stairs end at a shelf overlooking the rest of the room. It's a 20-foot drop to the floor below. Characters can climb down the shelf with a successful DC 15 Athletics check. A fall from the ledge deals 2d10 damage.

Pit: An asymmetrical pit 20 feet below the floor's level serves as a nest to vicious vipers. A character can climb the pit's walls with a successful DC 20 Athletics check. A fall deals 2d10 damage and the character is subject to an attack from the vipers when he or she hits the bottom.

Vicious Vipers **Level 10 Obstacle**
Hazard XP 500

Poisonous snakes writhe in a tangled mass across the bottom of the deep pit.

Trap: Vicious vipers cover each square of the pit as indicated on the tactical map. Each square containing the vipers counts as difficult terrain.

Perception
No check is necessary to notice the vipers.

Trigger
The mass of vipers attacks when a creature enters or starts its turn within a square of vicious vipers.

Attack ✦ Poison
Opportunity Action **Melee**
Target: Creature in a square containing vicious vipers
Attack: +15 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the vicious vipers make a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +13 vs. Fortitude; on a hit, the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).

Countermeasure
✦ A character can attack a square of vicious vipers (AC 21, other defenses 17; hp 88). Once a square of vipers is destroyed, it cannot attack and is no longer difficult terrain.

Treasure: Near the portal, the PCs find a ceremonial gold breastplate engraved with a serpent motif and a +3 *scalebane longsword* (*Adventurer's Vault*™, page 77) or another level 13 magic item.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is a freelance game designer with over one hundred design and development credits to his name. His most recent works include the *Player's Handbook® 2*, *Demon Queen's Enclave*™, *Manual of the Planes*™, *Martial Power*™, *Draconomicon*™: *Chromatic Dragons*, the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide*, and numerous articles in *Dragon®* and *Dungeon®* magazines. Robert lives in Tennessee with his wife Stacee and his crack kill-team of ninja cats.

Stormcrow Tor

By Bruce R. Cordell

illustrations by William O'Connor, Zoltan Boros & Gabor Szikszai

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A trio of unscrupulous adventurers called Stormcrow Company once laired in the caverns beneath a weathered pile of stones in the wilderness. It's been years, however, since the mercenaries have been seen. Rumors suggest Stormcrow Company is no more. If true, then the accumulated loot from raids, rewards, and assaults on dragons' hoards lies unguarded beneath a crown of jumbled stones. Does anyone dare to claim the prize?

"Stormcrow Tor" is a 4th Edition *Dungeons & Dragons*® adventure for five characters of 4th level. The adventure is completely self-contained, so it can be used in nearly any D&D® campaign.

Background

If players decide to investigate the tor, they can learn the following information with a successful History or Streetwise check:

DC 7: Illugi Swordbreaker, the Emerald Warlock, and Agera of the Shadow Face led a mercenary group called Stormcrow Company. Each had a storied adventuring background before they joined their strengths, but those stories are as nothing compared to the tales of the exploits of Stormcrow Company. The mercenaries made their base in old tunnels they found beneath a rocky tor in the wilderness.

DC 12: Though Stormcrow Company was credited with cleaning the goblin tribes out of nearby hills and killing the lich who threatened the valley from its dark tower, the adventurers also accepted contracts to assassinate nobles in a neighboring city-state, kidnapped an eladrin princess in return for a ransom of questionable relics, and even burned down an entire village on a lark while passing through. In the end, they were feared more than revered.

DC 17: Ten full years have passed since any member of Stormcrow Company has been seen, and that sighting (of Illugi Swordbreaker taking ship in an eastern port) is probably only rumor. Each year that passes with no news from Stormcrow Tor is a year that nearby keeps and walled villages give thanks. Anyone with an opinion on the topic now believes Stormcrow Company took on a challenge it was unequal to and came to a bad end in some far off land or echo dimension.

The Real Story

What no one outside Stormcrow Tor currently knows is that the adventuring group wasn't silenced by an external threat but by internal strife. In the end, an artifact pulled from the devastation of a ruined lich's tower (the Wrathstone) drove Stormcrow Company to madness. Tempers and paranoia ran riot. Before all-out internecine rivalry exterminated Stormcrow Company, each principle fortified his or her portion of the shared base, gathered secret allies, and tried to snare former friends in traps, catch them with curses, or kill them through simple force of arms.

A final paroxysm of rage and murder swept through the torchlit tunnels beneath Stormcrow Tor. When it was over, two of the three principles were dead and one was altered beyond all recognition.

In the years since, the old base has been partly colonized by kenku and myconids; even these opportunistic monsters, however, know to stay clear of the deepest chambers. Though great treasures surely reside there, so do the most insidious traps left behind by maddened mercenaries whose sanity was well and truly shredded long before their bodies followed. Things still move in the deeps, and not all of those things are living.

Adventure Synopsis

The "abandoned" tunnels beneath Stormcrow Tor comprise the quintessential small dungeon. Stories of the treasures hoarded up by the missing trio and their entourage have only grown in the telling. Heroes who hearken to these tales or are otherwise lured to the site find a collection of interesting encounters, and they learn what really happened to the original three adventurers. If they manage to press through all the way to the end, they even discover that one of the missing adventurers, Agera of the Shadow Face, yet remains beneath the Tor, though in a terrible state much changed from her original form. With perseverance, the PCs can liberate all the treasures that remain in the dungeon, though perhaps they should think twice about claiming the artifact that precipitated Stormcrow Company's destruction.

Adventure Hooks

The player characters hear about a location called Stormcrow Tor, which served as the base for a group of vanished adventurers. PCs interested in learning more can attempt the skill checks presented under Background. Discovering the tor's location in the wilderness is as easy as another DC 10 Streetwise check.

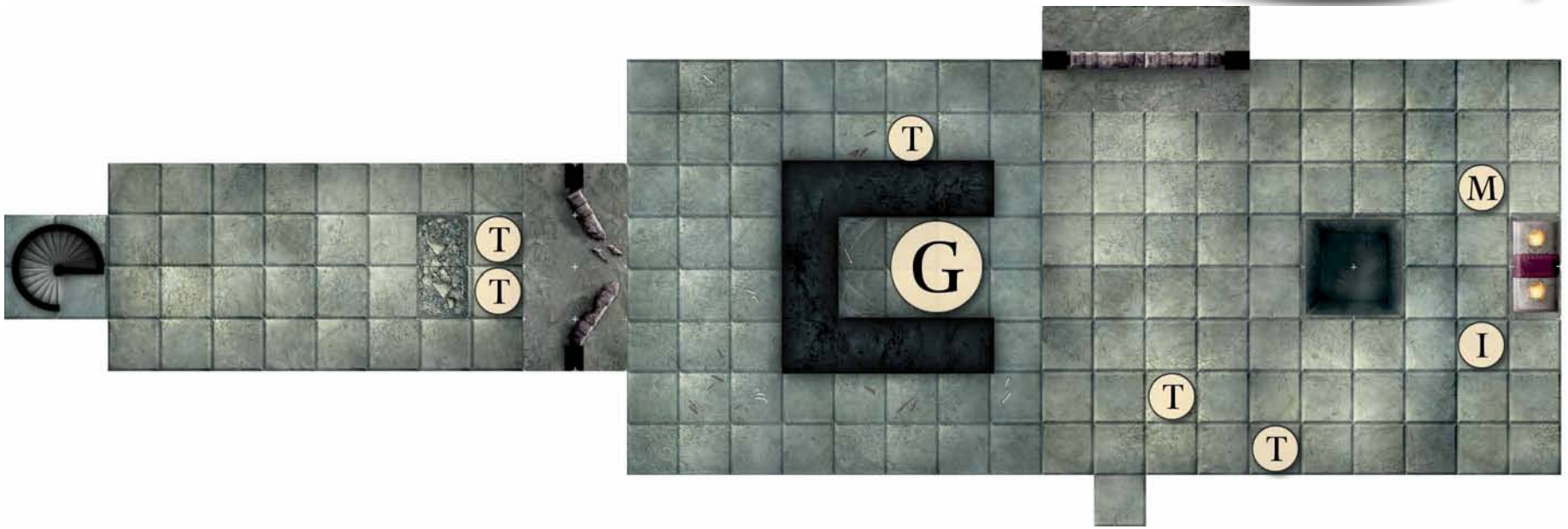
Alternatively, the characters might just happen upon the tor after finishing some other adventure or while they are traversing the wilderness. The entrance, with its beckoning tower, screams "lootable ruin" to savvy player characters.

Finally, you could fashion a more elaborate hook. Perhaps an enemy of a mercenary named under Background commissions the players to make certain Stormcrow Company is truly gone. Or, perhaps a collector of interesting relics or a wizard looking for powerful magic hires the PCs to locate the Wrathheart, the very relic that finally brought Stormcrow Company to ruin.

Starting the Adventure

Stormcrow Tor is at least a few days' travel from the closest keep or walled village. Vicious humanoids and other random dangers may lurk in the surrounding wilderness, at your discretion.

When the heroes arrive, refer to the Stormcrow Tor overview map on the following page, and Encounter 1: Entering the Tor.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Encounter T1: Entering the Tor

Encounter Level 6 (1,250 XP)

Setup

5 kenku tribals (T)
1 kenku inciter (I)
1 kenku wing mage (M)
1 gelatinous cube (G)

When the PCs first see the tor, read:

A weathered pile of stones and packed earth protrudes from the ground like a giant's rampart. The battered shell of a ruined tower leans from the tor's apex. The tower is roofless and hollow.

Climbing the tor requires a DC 5 Athletics check. Treat the entire tor, save for the 30-foot-diameter hollow tower interior, as difficult terrain. A crudely constructed wooden hatch door is only loosely covered by strewn leaves and dirt. The hatch opens onto an ancient stone circular stairwell that plunges down into the tor's heart.

If PCs descend into room 1's west end, read:

A 20-foot-wide hall leads east. Dirt and black feathers are strewn everywhere. At the far end, a barricade of tumbled stone stands before splintered and broken iron double doors. Two hooded heads poke over the barricade, watching the approach.

Ravenlike humanoids called kenku have claimed a portion of Stormcrow Company's old base for themselves.

A pair of kenku tribals guards the western portico of this chamber, behind a barricade (granting them both concealment from ranged attacks from the west).

If the 2 kenku hear invaders on the stairs, they use their *mimicry* ability while ducked down behind the barricade, making their voices sound just like one of the heroes (if they heard them talking) or a small child calling for help. The kenku attempt to draw the heroes forward, into the main chamber of room 1.

If combat breaks out, each kenku tribal throws 1 javelin, then retreats into the main chamber of room 1. The overall strategy of the kenku is to draw heroes into the main room, where heroes are more likely to fall into the clutches of either the mobile gelatinous cube or the one stuck at the bottom of the central pit.

5 Kenku Tribals (T) **Level 3 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 38 each

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15
Speed 6

Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Javelin (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Flock Effect
A kenku tribal gains a +3 bonus instead of +2 while flanking, and it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2 while aiding another.

Mimicry
A kenku tribal can mimic sounds and voices. A successful Insight check opposed by the tribal's Bluff check allows a listener to determine that the effect is faked.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, spear, 5 javelins

If PCs see into the main room, read:

An empty stone niche looks across the room's surprisingly dirt-free expanse, over an uncovered pit, to a shrine on the east wall that glimmers dimly. The words Stormcrow Company are scratched in the wall above the shrine. Dark forms scamper about the chamber.

Kenku Inciter (I) **Level 4 Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27
AC 20; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15
Speed 6

Spiked Chain (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the kenku inciter's next turn.

Sling (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage.

Chain Slide (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; targets an enemy marked by the kenku; +11 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

Flock Reaction (minor; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)
Close burst 3; targets kenkus; the target shifts 1 square as a free action.

Flock Effect
A kenku inciter gains a +3 bonus instead of +2 while flanking, and it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2 while aiding another.

Mimicry
A kenku inciter can mimic sounds and voices. A successful Insight check opposed by the inciter's Bluff check allows a listener to determine that the effect is faked.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +10, Intimidate +10
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 16 (+5)
Equipment leather armor, sling, spiked chain

Kenku Wing Mage (M)	Level 5 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18
Speed 6; see *wings of the flock*

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

Murder of Crows (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force, Implement**
Ranged 20; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 force damage, and the target grants combat advantage to the kenku wing mage (save ends).

Hurricane Blast (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Force, Implement**
Close blast 3; +8 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 6 force damage, and the kenku wing mage slides the target 3 squares.

Death Flock (standard; encounter) ✦ **Force, Implement**
Area burst 1 within 20; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 6 force damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Flock Effect
A kenku wing mage gains a +3 bonus instead of +2 while flanking, and it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2 while aiding another.

Mimicry
A kenku wing mage can mimic sounds and voices. A successful Insight check opposed by the inciter's Bluff check allows a listener to determine that the effect is faked.

Wings of the Flock (minor; encounter) ✦ **Force**
The kenku wing mage gains fly 6 (hover; altitude limit 4) until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +8

Str 9 (+1)	**Dex** 13 (+3)	**Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 18 (+6)	**Cha** 15 (+4)

Equipment robes, dagger, orb

Tactics

As described above, the kenku first try to lure heroes into the main room so that they can draw characters into or near the stone niche containing the mobile gelatinous cube or push characters into the pit that contains a gelatinous cube at its bottom.

Gelatinous Cube (C)	Level 5 Elite Brute
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 400

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +3; tremorsense 5
HP 152; **Bloodied** 76
AC 18; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15
Immune gaze; **Resist** 10 acid
Saving Throws +2
Speed 3; see also *engulf*
Action Points 1

Slam (standard; at-will)
+10 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 2 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Engulf (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
The gelatinous cube attacks one or two Medium or smaller targets; +8 vs. Reflex (automatically hits an immobilized creature). On a hit, the target is grabbed and pulled into the cube's space; the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 acid damage until it escapes the grab. A creature that escapes the grab shifts to a square of its choosing adjacent to the cube. The cube can move normally while creatures are engulfed within.

Translucent
A gelatinous cube is invisible until seen (Perception DC 25) or until it attacks. Creatures that fail to notice the gelatinous cube might walk into it, automatically becoming engulfed.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +9

Str 14 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+4)	**Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 1 (-3)	**Cha** 1 (-3)

The kenku tribals rely on their ranged javelins and resort to melee only if forced into it. The tribals remain clear of the 10-foot-wide unmarked space between the niche containing the gelatinous cube and the open pit.

The kenku inciter uses its *chain slide* ability to slide heroes either into the pit or toward the niche containing the gelatinous cube, whichever is close.

The kenku wing mage uses its *hurricane blast* to slide heroes toward the same doom as the inciter, whenever that power is available.

The mobile gelatinous cube doesn't enter combat until a hero is within 3 squares (allowing it to slide forward 3 and attack). Don't forget about the gelatinous cube's action point, which it should use to gain an extra *engulf* attack or an immediate attack against an immobilized enemy. The gelatinous cubes attack all creatures indiscriminately, so the kenku are sure to stay away from them.

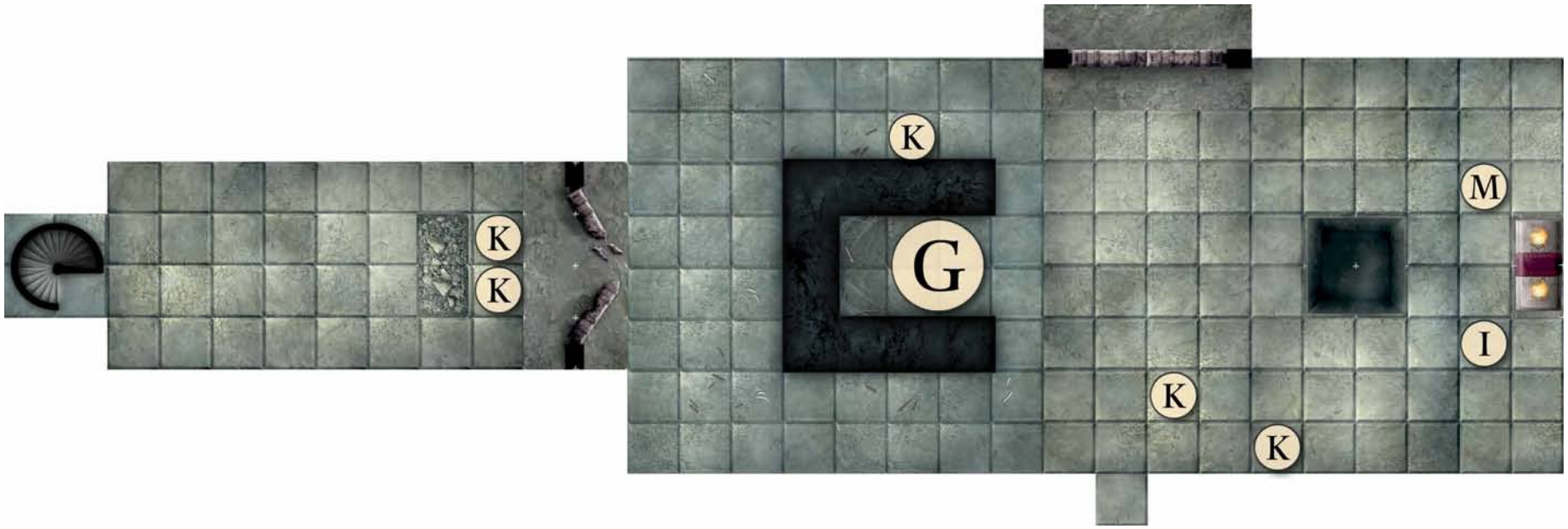
Features of the Area

Illumination: Dark. The kenku can see in the dark; the PCs must provide their own light source.

"Empty" Niche: The stone nook containing a gelatinous cube appears empty (DC 25 Perception check to notice otherwise). Every so often the cube slides forth and "cleans" the chamber of loose feathers and dirt, during which times the kenku make themselves absent.

Pit: The bottom 10 feet of this 30-foot-deep pit contains another gelatinous cube, but this one can't move or attack. Any creature that falls in is automatically *engulfed*. Creatures that escape the engulfing grab must immediately succeed at a DC 15 Athletics check to maintain a hold on the side of the rough wall (DC 10 if someone lowers a rope) or fall back into the body of the cube. This cube does not make *slam* attacks. It can be detected only if characters examine the pit specifically (or someone falls in, of course); a cursory search of the chamber won't reveal it. The presence of this cube contributes 285 XP to this encounter, which is already figured into the total.

Shrine: The shrine (and the rest of the chamber) once contained trophies of Stormcrow Company's adventuring successes. The few valuable ones were looted and the rest destroyed years ago.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Encounter T2: Fungal Cellar

Encounter Level 4 (800 XP)

Setup

2 myconid guards (G)
1 myconid rotpriest (R)
1 myconid sovereign (S)
1 fungal bloodthorn (B)

The narrow stairs that lead from area 1 to area 2 reveal something of the current tenants.

When PCs look down the stairs toward the door to area 2, read:

The air in the stairwell is damp and smells of forest rot. The steep stairs descend 20 feet and end at a door. The door is covered in an uneven layer of slightly phosphorescent fungus.

This was once Stormcrow Company's cellar, where they stored a fabulous assortment of food, wine, ale, and rare spirits. With the mercenaries' absence, however, the natural, cool damp in the chamber allowed spores from a foray into the Feywild to germinate and spread without interference.

A tiny colony of myconids now infests the chamber. The kenku have launched several sorties into the chamber, so the myconids have prepared themselves to eliminate any nonfungal creature that attempts to enter through the northern doorway.

The myconids in the chamber do not immediately attack unless they are attacked. The myconid sovereign stands unmoving like a natural fungus stalk on the far wall, and the other myconids are resting in one of the side chambers.

Unless the PCs see the myconid sovereign for what it is and attack, the encounter begins when one or more PCs come adjacent to the pool. At that point, the fungal bloodthorn squatting beneath the surface launches a surprise attack.

When PCs look into this chamber, read:

Bioluminescent fungi coat the walls and ceiling of this cool, moist chamber, and tiny mushrooms and other fungal stalks carpet the floor and the detritus of barrels, crates, and shelves littering the chamber's corners. Slimy water pools in the chamber's center. The pool is bracketed by four piles of humanoid skulls. A particularly large fungus stalk grows up the far wall.

Perception Check

DC 24 *The particularly large mushroom growing up the opposite wall has eyes!*

2 Myconid Guards (G)	**Level 4 Soldier**
Medium fey humanoid (plant)	XP 175 each
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +3; tremorsense 10
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Spiny Strike** (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.	
⊹ **Pacification Spores** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Poison**	
Close burst 1; +9 vs. Will; 1d6 + 3 poison damage, and the target cannot take a standard action until the end of the myconid guard's next turn.	
Roots of the Colony (free, when the myconid guard is hit by an attack while a myconid ally is within 5 squares of it; at-will)	
The myconid guard takes half damage from the attack, and the myconid ally takes the same amount of damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 18 (+6)	**Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Myconid Rotpriest (R)	**Level 3 Brute (Leader)**
Medium fey humanoid (plant)	XP 150
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +3; tremorsense 10
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24; see also *life burst*	
Regeneration 5	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 16	
Vulnerable radiant (if the myconid rotpriest takes radiant damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of the rotpriest's next turn)	
Speed 5	
⊕ **Stipe Staff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+6 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage.	
⊹ **Decomposing Spray** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Close burst 3; +6 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 3 necrotic damage.	
⊹ **Life Burst** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Healing**	
Close burst 1; targets living creatures; the target regains 10 hit points.	
Roots of the Colony (free, when the myconid rotpriest is hit by an attack while a myconid ally is within 5 squares of it; at-will)	
The rotpriest takes half damage from the attack, and the myconid ally takes the same amount of damage.	
Sacrifice for the Colony (free, when a myconid ally uses roots of the colony to deal damage to the myconid rotpriest; at-will)	
The rotpriest takes the damage dealt to the ally, and the ally takes none.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 10 (+1)	**Dex** 12 (+2) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 18 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 18 (+5)
Equipment quarterstaff	

Myconid Sovereign (S)	**Level 4 Controller (Leader)**
Large fey humanoid (plant)	XP 175
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +0; tremorsense 10
HP 58; **Bloodied** 29	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.	
✧ **Spore Burst** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Poison**	
Close blast 3; targets nonplants; +8 vs. Will; 1d8 + 3 poison damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the myconid sovereign's next turn.	
✧ **Commanding Spores** (standard; at-will)	
Close burst 5; targets one plant ally in burst; the target shifts 1 square.	
Roots of the Colony (free, when the myconid sovereign is hit by an attack while a myconid ally is within 5 squares of it; at-will)	
The myconid sovereign takes half of the damage from the attack, and the myconid ally takes the same amount of damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** telepathy 5
Str 7 (+0)	**Dex** 11 (+2) **Wis** 8 (+1)
Con 18 (+6)	**Int** 7 (+0) **Cha** 12 (+3)

Fungal Bloodthorn (B)	**Level 2 Soldier**
Large natural beast (aquatic, plant)	XP 125
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception +3; blindsight 10
HP 41; **Bloodied** 20	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14	
Speed 5 (forest walk)	
⊕ **Striking Vine** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.	
ǂ **Impaling Thorn** (standard; recharges when the fungal bloodthorn doesn't have a creature grabbed) ✦ **Healing**	
The vine impales the target's flesh with a thorn: Reach 2; +9 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is grabbed. *Sustain Standard*: The bloodthorn sustains the grab, the target takes 2d8 + 4 damage, and the vine regains 5 hit points.	
Pulling Thorns (minor; at-will)	
The bloodthorn shifts 1 square, pulling any creature grabbed by it into a space adjacent to it.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 17 (+4)	**Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	**Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 6 (-1)

Tactics

The fight likely starts when the fungal bloodthorn surfaces from beneath the pool (appearing as a mass of fungal vines) and attempts to use *striking vine* or *impaling thorn*; it may do so as a surprise action. If it can use the latter, it pulls its victim into the water. The water is only waist-deep, which means Medium creatures (other than the bloodthorn) treat it as difficult terrain.

The myconids in the side chambers rush to join the fight as soon as they are able. The rotpriest positions itself near the myconid guards, absorbing their damage with *roots of the colony* and *sacrifice for the colony* and then regenerating. It uses *decomposing spray* when it can hit multiple targets. Otherwise, it uses its *stipe staff* to bludgeon enemies.

The myconid sovereign remains behind its allies, relying on them for protection. It uses *commanding spores* to make certain its allies continue to protect it. It uses *spore burst* even when enemies are engaged in melee with its allies (since they're all plants, they are immune to the effect).

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim. The bioluminescent fungi on the wall provides a candlelike glow to the main chamber of this area.

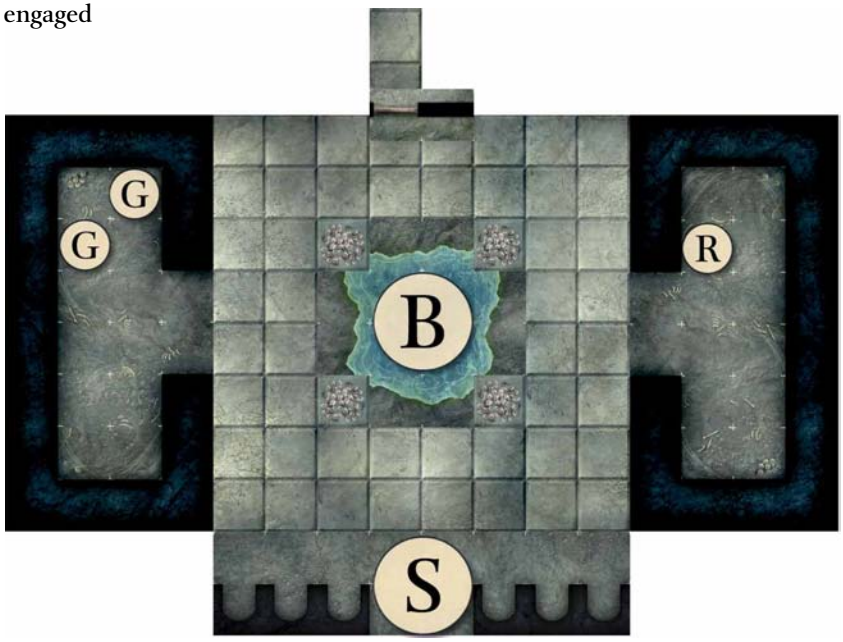
Central Pool: The water in the pool is about three and a half feet deep, serving as difficult terrain for Medium creatures. Small creatures must swim. The water in the pool is tinged with virulent spores that act like a poison—any nonplant that enters or starts its turn in the water gains ongoing poison 1 (save ends).

Skull Piles: Simple trophies. Among the recent kenku heads are very old goblin and human skulls. A skull pile is high enough to provide concealment against ranged attacks.

Corner Detritus: Though not thick enough to serve as difficult terrain, the remains of barrels, crates, kegs, and other storage vessels swept into the corners of this chamber make it easy to determine that the chamber was once a cellar for storing food and spirits.

Side Caves: These areas are cooler than the main area, and the myconids spend much of their time there in spore-induced communion with each other and the lesser plants.

Treasure: A small, rusted iron chest is lodged in the wall of the western cave. The chest is locked (DC 18 Thievery check to open). The well-padded interior holds one parcel of treasure.



Encounter T3: Mausoleum

Encounter Level 5 (915 XP)

Setup

10 kenku tribals (T)
1 kenku sneak (K)
2 specters (S)
1 wraith (W)

Kenkus inhabit the western part of this chamber, careful not to disturb spirits that haunt the place. If they hear the party, they hide (Perception DC 21 to spot one; DC 23 to spot the sneak) and attack only when the PCs come closer to the mausoleum. The undead do not emerge until after combat begins.

When PCs see the area, read:

To the east, a glowing pool fills a cistern. To the west, a smoky campfire burns between four stone coffins. Two coffins are sealed and two are cracked open.

Arcana Check (Standard Action)

DC 18: *The pool has a strong but chaotic magical aura. Multiple effects mix in that aura, obscuring your ability to discern one from another.*

DC 22: *Beneficial magic, probably similar to that conferred by rituals, resides in the water. The mixture might have dangerous side effects, however.*

When PCs see into the mausoleum, read:

Three sealed crypts line the western wall. A fossilized skeleton of a dragon, half chiseled out of a block of stone and free of clutter, rests like a shrine to necromancy along the south wall. Remnants of fires, past meals, bedding, crude implements for spear making, and similar bits are scattered everywhere. Scattered black feathers are prominent among the debris.

When the kenkus attack, read:

Ravenlike humanoids rush from cover to attack you. One of them shouts, "Don't let the intruders touch the holy dragon!"

Arcana Check (Standard Action)

DC 22: *The skeleton has a slight necrotic aura. It might be dangerous, but if so, the effect is unlikely to be very potent.*

Insight Check

DC 20: *The kenku's words lack conviction. Perhaps the skeleton is a trap of some sort.*

10 Kenku Tribals (T)	**Level 3 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 38 each
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	
(+) **Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
(+) **Javelin** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
Flock Effect	
A kenku tribal gains a +3 bonus instead of +2 while flanking, and it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2 while aiding another.	
Mimicry	
A kenku triabal can mimic sounds and voices. A successful Insight check opposed by the tribal's Bluff check allows a listener to determine that the effect is faked.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9	
Str 12 (+2)	**Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, spear, 5 javelins	

Kenku Sneak (K)	**Level 4 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175
Initiative +10	**Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15	
Speed 7 (4 while invisible)	
(+) **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 6 damage.	
(+) **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 5/10; +9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 6 damage.	
Disappear into the Flock	
While it has cover from other kenkus, a kenku sneak can make a Stealth check to become hidden.	
Flock Effect	
A kenku tribal gains a +3 bonus instead of +2 while flanking, and it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2 while aiding another.	
Hidden Strike	
A kenku sneak deals 2d4 + 4 extra damage against any target from which it is hidden.	
Mimicry	
A kenku triabal can mimic sounds and voices. A successful Insight check opposed by the tribal's Bluff check allows a listener to determine that the effect is faked.	
Sniper	
A hidden kenku sneak that misses with a ranged attack remains hidden.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +8, Stealth +11, Thievery +11	
Str 15 (+4)	**Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 12 (+3)	**Int** 13 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, 6 daggers	

Wraith (W)	Level 5 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 200

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +2; darkvision
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18
Regeneration 5 (if the wraith takes radiant damage, regeneration is negated until the end of the wraith's next turn)
AC 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial
Vulnerable 5 radiant (see also regeneration above)
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing; see also *shadow glide*

⊕ **Shadow Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

Combat Advantage ✦ **Necrotic**
The wraith deals an extra 1d6 necrotic damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Shadow Glide (move; encounter)
The wraith shifts 6 squares.

Spawn Wraith
Any humanoid killed by a wraith rises as a free-willed wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +11

Str 4 (-1)	**Dex** 18 (+6)	**Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 13 (+3)	**Int** 6 (+0)	**Cha** 15 (+4)

Tactics

The kenkus move away from the skeleton, hoping the PCs try to touch it, which the kenku's know rouses the undead to attack. If the characters do touch the skeleton, the undead target them and ignore the kenkus. If the PCs don't disturb the skeleton during the first round, a kenku does during the second round—likely by hurling a javelin at it.

2 Specters (S)	Level 4 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 175 each

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
Spectral Chill (**Cold**) aura 1; enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to all defenses.
HP 30; **Bloodied** 15
AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial
Vulnerable 5 radiant
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing

⊕ **Spectral Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 2 necrotic damage.

Spectral Barrage (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Illusion, Psychic**
Close burst 2; targets enemies; +7 vs. Will; 2d6 + 2 psychic damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Invisibility (standard; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The specter becomes invisible until it attacks or until it is hit by an attack.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9

Str 10 (+2)	**Dex** 15 (+4)	**Wis** 8 (+1)
Con 13 (+3)	**Int** 6 (+0)	**Cha** 15 (+4)

When the skeleton is touched or disturbed, such as by being attacked or in the area of an attack, the undead phase out of their crypts and attack. The specters begin invisible. If the kenkus disturbed the skeleton, the undead occasionally attack one of them but prefer the PCs' stronger life force and power.

Tribals far from enemies use their ranged javelin attacks, but those close enough try to use their *flock effect* to gain the attack bonus. The kenku sneak uses the other kenkus (*disappear into the flock*) and the large coffins to hide behind so it can use its *sniper* and *hidden strike* abilities.

Magic Fountain

A magic fountain lies in the hallway east of the Mausoleum. The Stormcrow Company managed to move a magic fountain from the tower of an evil wizard they overthrew to their own base. The fountain's reliability suffered in the transport. It confers an ability or disability upon each person that drinks from the fountain no more than 1/day. The fountain confers effects similar to rituals where the skill check to perform the ritual, if any is required, is +10. However, it may also confer a disease!

D6	Ability
1	Blinding Sickness (DMG 49)
2	Comprehend Languages (PH 302)
3	Endure Elements (PH 304)
4	Discern Lies (PH 303)
5	Speak with Dead (PH 313)
6	Wizard's Sight (PH 315)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright.

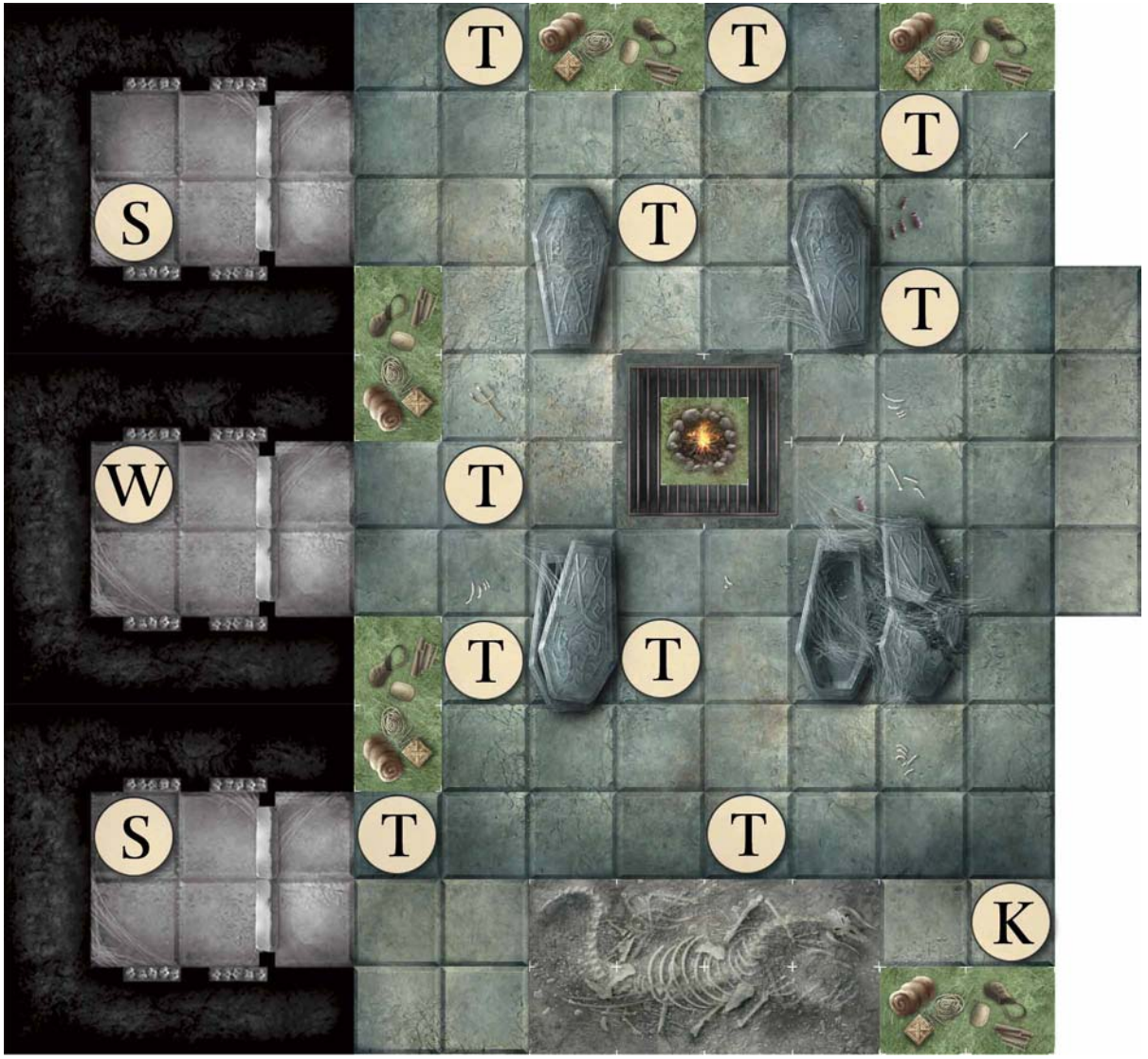
Drain: The drain was used by the Emerald Warlock to catch excess blood from victims of his experiments. Now it is a grating for campfires.

Dragon Skeleton: This relic of a dead monster is charged with just enough residual power to rouse the undead in the chamber if disturbed.

Stone Coffins: Two of the coffins are open and empty; two are closed, and names are chiseled on their faces. One name is Illugi Swordbreaker, the other is Emerald Warlock. Opening either coffin (DC 15 Athletics check) reveals a humanoid body in each. If the PCs drank from the magic fountain in the hallway leading to this chamber, one may have the ability to Speak with Dead. They can try their luck on one of the bodies to learn what happened to the Stormcrows. The dead one volunteers one final bit of information; "Take the key in my crypt—use it to bypass the Force Door that seals Agera of the Shadow Face's final redoubt."

A platinum key is hidden amid the dust in one of the coffins (Perception DC 15 to find it without the aid of the hint; no check needed with the hint).

Treasure: The coffins also hold a parcel of treasure.



Encounter T4: Lightning Hall

Encounter Level 2 (650 XP)

Setup

1 force burst wall (F)
1 poisoned dart passage (D)
1 lightning hallway (L)

Deeper access is sealed behind a magical wall of force and a flaring expanse of lightning. The room at the west end of the hallway is only an empty lure.

Force Burst Wall (F) **Level 5 Obstacle**
Trap XP 200

A flaring, translucent wall of blue force hangs like a sheet of wavering glass, blocking access between the corridor and the stone chamber vaguely visible on the other side. The chamber on the other side is empty but for a single closed door.

Trap: A field of force explodes outward when the trap goes off.

Perception
- ✦ **DC 18:** The character notices the squares in front of the wall are trigger plates.
- ✦ **DC 22:** The character notices the hidden control panel set on the left side of the wall. The control panel contains only a single keyhole.

Trigger
When a character moves into a trigger square, the wall attacks with a burst of blazing blue force as an opportunity action. Then the trap rolls initiative and attacks as a standard action each round thereafter.

Initiative +7

Attack
Opportunity Action/Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 4 force damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Countermeasures
- ✦ A character can use the key to deactivate the trap but must turn the key counter-clockwise to do so. Turning it the other direction allows the trap to attack again as a free action. Success disables the trap.
- ✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 22 (Standard Action) Six successful checks made on the control panel disables the trap.
- ✦ A character can attack the wall (Defenses 5; hp 100) or the control panel (Defenses 12; hp 60). Destroying either disables the force burst wall.

Poisoned Dart Passage (D) **Level 6 Blaster**
Trap XP 250

This 20-foot-long corridor seems empty but for a single door on either end.

Trap: Poisoned darts fill the chamber like angry bees when the trap goes off.

Perception
- ✦ **DC 12:** The eastern door has a large keyhole.
- ✦ **DC 22:** The character notices the small holes in the walls.
- ✦ **DC 25:** The character notices that the broad flagstones are loose and may be pressure plates.

Trigger
When four squares of pressure plates are activated (four or more PCs enter the area) or someone tries to open the eastern door without the platinum key, the trap attacks as an opportunity action, then rolls initiative and attacks as a standard action each round thereafter. When the trap activates, both doors immediately close and lock. An open door can be prevented from closing if a character adjacent to the door when the trap is triggered makes an immediate DC 12 Athletics check. To hold the door open after that is a standard action requiring another DC 12 Athletics check on the character's turn, and the character is considered Dazed (ends immediately when the character fails the Athletics check or voluntarily lets the door close).

Initiative +7

Attack
Opportunity Action/Standard Action **Close** burst fills room
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Countermeasures
- ✦ Thievery DC 25 (Standard Action) A successful check disables one square of the pressure-sensitive floor.
- ✦ Thievery DC 22 (Standard Action) A successful check opens the lock on either door. If the eastern door is unlocked in this way, the trap triggers and the door relocks.

Lightning Hallway (L) **Level 5 Obstacle**
Trap XP 200

Lightning constantly flares down the length of his hallway, emanating from an iron spike set in the floor on the hallway's eastern end.

Trap: This field of flickering lightning threatens the entire hallway (18 contiguous squares), rendering it difficult terrain.

Perception
No check is necessary to notice the lightning.
- ✦ **DC 22:** The character notices the hidden control panel set on the wall at the eastern end of the hallway.

Arcana
- ✦ **DC 18:** The lightning is attracted to those touching a surface in the room. Jumping, tumbling, or flying might allow one to move without attracting the lightning.

Trigger
When a creature moves more than 1 square along a surface in the room, the trap attacks as an opportunity action. The trap attacks a second time if a creature moves more than 6 squares in one turn.

Attack
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: The triggering creature and one other creature
Attack: +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 2 lightning damage and ongoing 5 lightning damage (save ends), and the target is teleported to the empty chamber north of force wall trap.

Countermeasures
- ✦ Arcana DC 22 (Trained only; Immediate Reaction, when the trap attacks) Targets receive +2 to Reflex against the trap's attack for the duration of the encounter.
- ✦ Acrobatics DC 20 (Trained only; Move Action) The character tumbles across the floor, moving without triggering the trap.
- ✦ Athletics (Move Action) A character can avoid triggering the trap by jumping from one nontrapped square to another.
- ✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 22 (Standard Action) Six successful checks made on the control panel disables the trap.

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Encounter T5: Hall of Summoning

Encounter Level 4 (850+ XP)

Setup

4 flamespikers (F)
1+ flamespiker tongues

Agera of the Shadow Face's paranoia led her to entrench herself behind a series of dangerous chambers. She perverted what had been Illugi Swordbreaker's weapon practice chamber, which summoned worthy foes for Illugi to deal with, into a chamber that summons monsters, one after the next, until the enchantment is broken.

When PCs first see the room, they observe that the chamber seems empty (don't place the monsters). However, when any creature enters 3 or more squares into the chamber, the brazier flares; roll initiative at that time.

The first time the central brazier flares, it summons 4 flamespikers, one to each summoning circle. On each subsequent round, on its initiative, the brazier summons a flamespiker tongue. The minions appear in one of the summoning circles (determine tactically) in an open square.

When players see the room, read:

This chamber is brightly lit by a violently burning brazier of fire. Four glowing sigil circles are scribed in the floor, one per corner.

Arcana Check (Standard Action)

DC 18: *The circles are summoning circles, and the brazier at the room's center is a summoning device. Destroying it should end any summoning here.*

4 Flamespikers (F) **Level 5 Soldier**
Medium elemental magical beast (air, earth, fire) XP 200 each
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16
Immune disease, petrification, poison; **Resist** 10 fire
Speed 7

⊕ **Stonespike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 damage plus 1d6 fire damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 fire and is marked until the end of the flamespiker's next turn.

⊕ **Spikebolt** (standard; at-will)
Ranged 5/10; +12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.

↯ **Thunderfire Thrust** (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 2 squares of the flamespiker shifts; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire, Thunder**
The flamespiker uses stonespike against the triggering enemy. On a hit, the flamespiker makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +10 vs. Fortitude; 5 thunder damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 8 (+1)

1+ Flamespiker Tongues (T) **Level 5 Minion Brute**
Medium elemental magical beast (air, earth, fire) XP 50 each
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16
Immune disease, petrification, poison; **Resist** 10 fire
Speed 7

⊕ **Spike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 6 fire damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 8 (+1)

Tactics

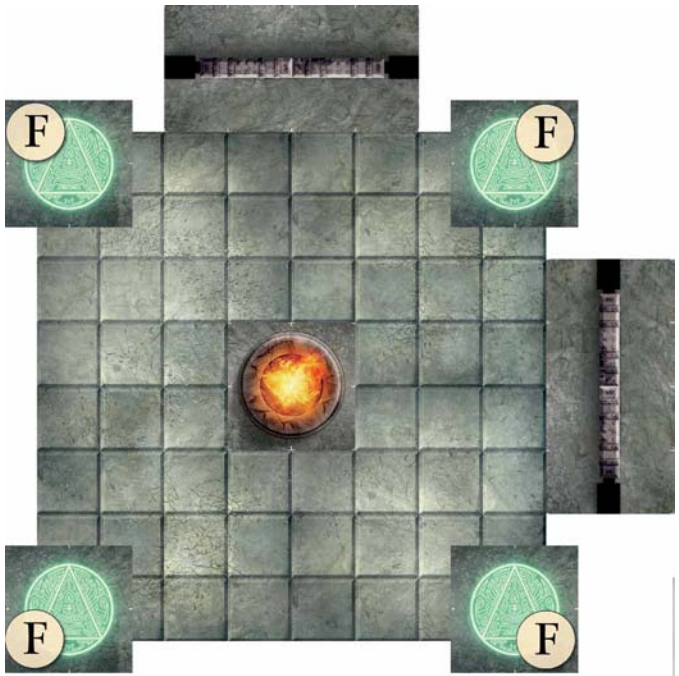
The brazier continues summoning additional flamespiker tongues until it is disabled or it has summoned a total of eight flamespiker tongues in an 8-hour period. The summoned creatures pursue the PCs even if the heroes leave this chamber.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright. The central brazier lights the whole room.

Summoning Circles: Glowing inscriptions serve as a focus for the magic that summons monsters to this chamber, which emanates from the brazier.

Summoning Brazier: The brazier summons creatures as noted under Setup and Tactics. A character can attack the brazier (defenses 5; hp 75); Destroying it ends the summoning effect permanently.



Encounter T6: What's My Name?

Encounter Level 4 (800 XP)

Setup

1 arbelester (A)
2 stonefist defenders (D)
1 clay scout (C)
1 iron cobra (I)

Before the madness that brought them low, Stormcrow Company prepared a special puzzle test chamber designed to provide those with "permission" to move into their ultimate vault chamber where the mercenaries stored their most significant loot.

The constructs are visible in the chamber as shown on the tactical map. They do not activate until attacked, however, or until a PC moves into the letter grid or moves one of the raven statues onto the letter grid.

When PCs see the chamber, read:

Four statues are arranged near the northern entrance. To the south, a grid of letters is inscribed in the floor.

C	*U*	*I*	*N*
B	*R*	*M*	*L*
S	*G*	*O*	*A*
E	*P*	*Q*	*W*

Several odd-looking, partly humanoid constructs and one iron cobra-like construct flank the letter grid, motionless.

A niche on the south wall glows with faintly purple light.

Arcana Check (Standard Action)

DC 18: *The purple light is the weak manifestation of a closed magical portal.*

Tactics

The letter grid is the guarded area for all of the constructs. They focus on characters in this area.

The iron cobra slithers forward and attacks with its poisonous *bite* first and uses *poison the mind* against the envenomed creature before moving on to the next target using *slithering shift*. The clay scout disappears when the combat begins (with *limited invisibility*), then spends a round positioning itself to be able to affect PCs. It prefers *mind touch* to daze enemies (thus becoming invisible to them). It then tries to bite creatures that can't see it while using *redirect* to protect itself. The stonefist defenders try to flank foes in order to gain their *guarded area* bonus to hit. The arbalester fires away at PCs, using *double shot* as often as possible to attack two heroes at once.

2 Stonefist Defenders (D) **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Small natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 125 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4; darkvision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19
AC 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14
Immune disease, poison
Speed 8

⊕ **Spiked Fist** (standard; at-will)
+7 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.

Guard Area
A stonefist gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against any enemy in its guarded area.

Synchronized Flank
While a stonefist is flanking an enemy that is in its guarded area, its attacks deal 1d6 extra damage against the flanked enemy.

Tumble (move; at-will)
The stonefist shifts 3 squares.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Acrobatics +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+4)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 7 (-1)

Arbalester (A) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 175

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
HP 43; **Bloodied** 21
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15
Immune disease, poison
Speed 6

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.

⊕ **Bolt** (standard; at-will)
Ranged 20/40; +11 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

Double Shot (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)
The arbalester makes two bolt attacks, each against a different target. The targets must be within 5 squares of each other.

Guard Area
If an enemy is within an arbalester's guarded area at the start of the arbalester's turn, the arbalester recharges double shot.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 5 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+1)

Clay Scout (C)	**Level 2 Lurker**
Small natural animate (construct, homunculus)	XP 125
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 31; **Bloodied** 15	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 6, fly 3 (clumsy)	
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**	
+3 vs. AC; 1d6 damage, and the homunculus makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +2 vs. Fortitude; the target is slowed (save ends). See also guard area.	
Mind Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
Ranged 10; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends); see also *guard area*.	
Guard Area	
The clay scout gains a +4 bonus to attack rolls against targets in its guarded area.	
Limited Invisibility ✦ **Illusion**	
The clay scout is invisible to dazed creatures.	
Redirect (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or a ranged attack; at-will)	
The clay scout makes an attack against the attacker: +4 vs. Will; the triggering attack targets a creature adjacent to the clay scout instead (as chosen by the clay scout).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Skills Stealth +8	
Str 10 (+1)	**Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	**Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 16 (+4)

Iron Cobra (I)	**Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus)	XP 250
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
HP 75; **Bloodied** 37	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 7; see also *slithering shift*	
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Poison the Mind (standard; recharge ⚁ ⚂ ⚃ ⚄) ✦ **Psychic**	
Ranged 10; affects only creatures taking ongoing poison damage; +8 vs. Will; the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both); see also *guard area*.	
Guard Area	
An iron cobra can use its *poison the mind* power against any creature in its guarded area, even if the power hasn't recharged and even if the target isn't taking ongoing poison damage.	
Slithering Shift (move; at-will)	
The iron cobra shifts 3 squares as a move action.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Skills Stealth +10	
Str 17 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 19 (+7)	**Int** 5 (+0) **Cha** 12 (+4)

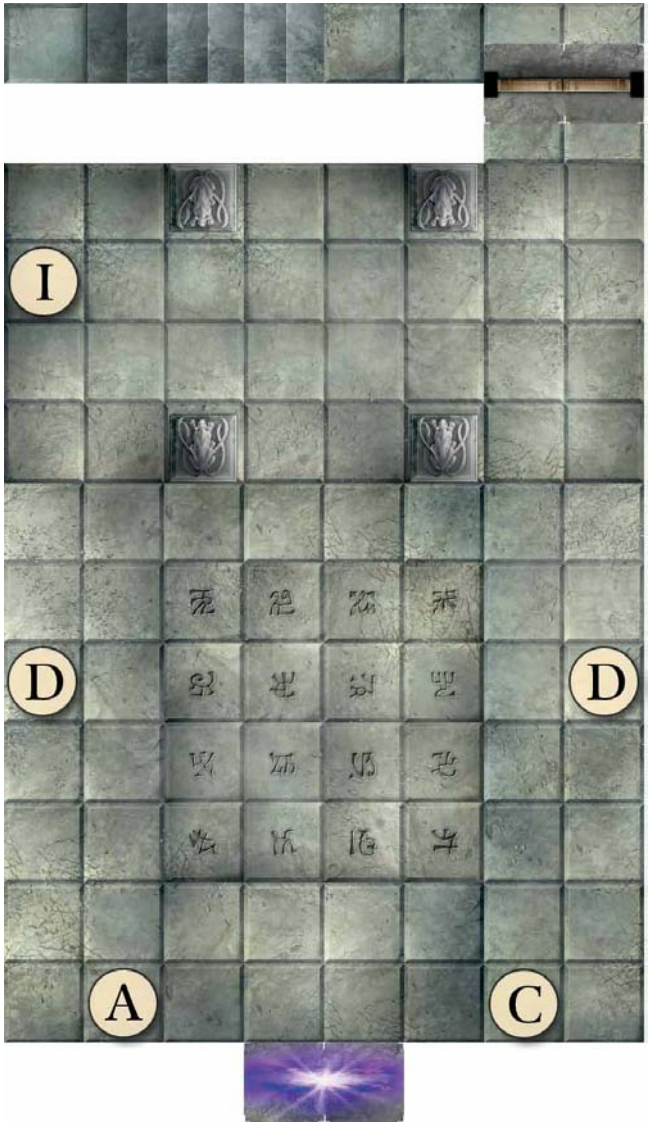
Features of the Area

Illumination: Dark. The portal sheds dim light in its square and into adjacent squares. When activated, it flares to bright light and illuminates the whole chamber.

Statues: Investigation shows these statues aren't attached to the floor, and that they're lighter then they appear. Each one can be moved a number of squares equal 1 + a character's Strength modifier per move action expended. The statues fit nicely on any of the letter tiles in the letter grid to the south.

Letter Grid: The letters, inscribed in the Common script, are arranged as noted on the previous page. If the letters that spell out CROW are each covered by a statue or similarly heavy object, the portal in the southern wall flares into life and remains active while the statues remain on their squares.

Portal: Once activated, this portal provides instant transportation from this chamber to the portal niche in room 7. Walking through the portal is part of a move action, and those appearing on the other side can continue to move up the limit of their speed when they arrive. Those who arrive in room 7 discover the portal is apparently one way (at least at first).



Encounter T7: Stormcrow Vault Room

Encounter Level 7 (1,728 XP)

Setup

Agera of the Shadow Face (A)
6 infernal armor animuses (I)

When Agera of the Shadow Face won the battle against her fellows, she retreated to the vault chamber and lay down to "sleep" with the Wrathstone around her neck. Decades later, Agera yet sleeps, though her body died long ago. Her mind, however, is tied to the Wrathstone. If this chamber is invaded, Agera awakens to defend it, as insane as ever.

When the players appear through the portal in the west wall, provide the read-aloud text. The infernal armors initially appear as part of the general detritus littering each smashed vault, until they "activate."

If a PC enters one of the corner crypts, opens the sarcophagus in the center of the chamber, or interacts with anything on the workbench, Agera emerges from her sarcophagus. Roll initiative! The infernal armor animuses rise as a free action on their turn, two from each broken vault.

When PCs enter the chamber, read:

This wide chamber is dominated by a stone sarcophagus which sits upon a hellish design painted on the floor in glistening blood. Three of the corners hold smashed-in vault doors. The southeast corner instead contains a workbench and chair, though a ward of blue-glowing glyphs surrounds it protectively.

When PCs trigger Agera's appearance, read:

The sarcophagus cover explodes! Standing in the swirling dust is an emaciated tiefling woman who looks more devil than human, and all dead. A red stone on an iron chain blazes on her chest. She screams, "No one can have the Wrathstone but me! You'll die, just like all the rest. Perhaps it will be your souls that will finally pay my way into Asmodeus's Court!"

Tactics

The infernal armors hold back for the first few rounds, allowing Agera to engage the players (if they are destroyed before Agera takes any damage, the armors' ability to transfer hit points to her will be wasted).

Agera turns her foes against each other whenever possible. She uses *invocation of wrath* whenever she can, saving *wrathfire curse* for when she can hit two or more PCs.

If it becomes clear that the heroes will likely win the fight, Agera calls on Asmodeus to "Strike down these mortal shells, as you did Illugi Swordbreaker and the Emerald Warlock. Take their souls, as you did my former compatriots, as my sacrifice to you!"

Nothing comes of this, but it may give the PCs a moment of uncertainty before their triumph.

Wrathstone

The Wrathstone may be an artifact, but its full artifact powers have yet to be activated (perhaps they never will be, but if they are, they result in devilish corruption not unlike Agera's). In the short term, treat the red gem on an iron chain found around Agera's neck as a +2 *amulet of false life* with one additional ability that is not initially known to the wearer. The property becomes known only when events lead to the amulet's first power usage.

Property: Whenever the daily power of this item is used, you must make an immediate basic attack against your closest ally. If no ally is in range of your basic attack, ignore this requirement.

Agera of the Shadow Face (A) — **Level 7 Solo Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (devil, undead) — XP 1,500

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision
HP 316; **Bloodied** 158; see also *wrathfire curse*
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, Reflex 20, **Will** 19
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 8 fire, 5 necrotic
Saving Throws +5
Speed 8
Action Points 2

Horn Staff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage plus 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Unhinging Ray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 20; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target slides 2 squares and makes a basic attack against an ally within range.

Hellish Wrath (standard; at-will)
Agera makes three basic attacks.

Grave Wrath (immediate reaction, when Agera is hit by a creature adjacent to her; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+11 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 3 squares, and is slowed and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends both).

Invocation of Wrath (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Charm**
Close burst 2; +9 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends).

Wrathfire Curse (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Charm, Fire**
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 fire damage, and the target slides 2 squares and makes an at-will attack against an ally within range. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target sides 1 square.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Arcana +12, Athletics +10, Insight +7
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 19 (+7) **Cha** 16 (+6)

6 Infernal Armor Animuses (I) — **Level 3 Minion Soldier**
Medium immortal animate (devil, undead) — XP 38 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +1; darkvision
Bloodlust aura 2; each nonminion devil within the aura gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls. Multiple boodlust auras grant a cumulative bonus.
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see also *essence transference*
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14
Resist 5 fire
Speed 6

Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Essence Transference (when the infernal armor animus drops to 0 hit points) ✦ **Healing**
The nearest nonminion devil within 5 squares of the animus regains 15 hit points.

Alignment Evil **Languages** –
Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment heavy shield, short sword

Features of the Area

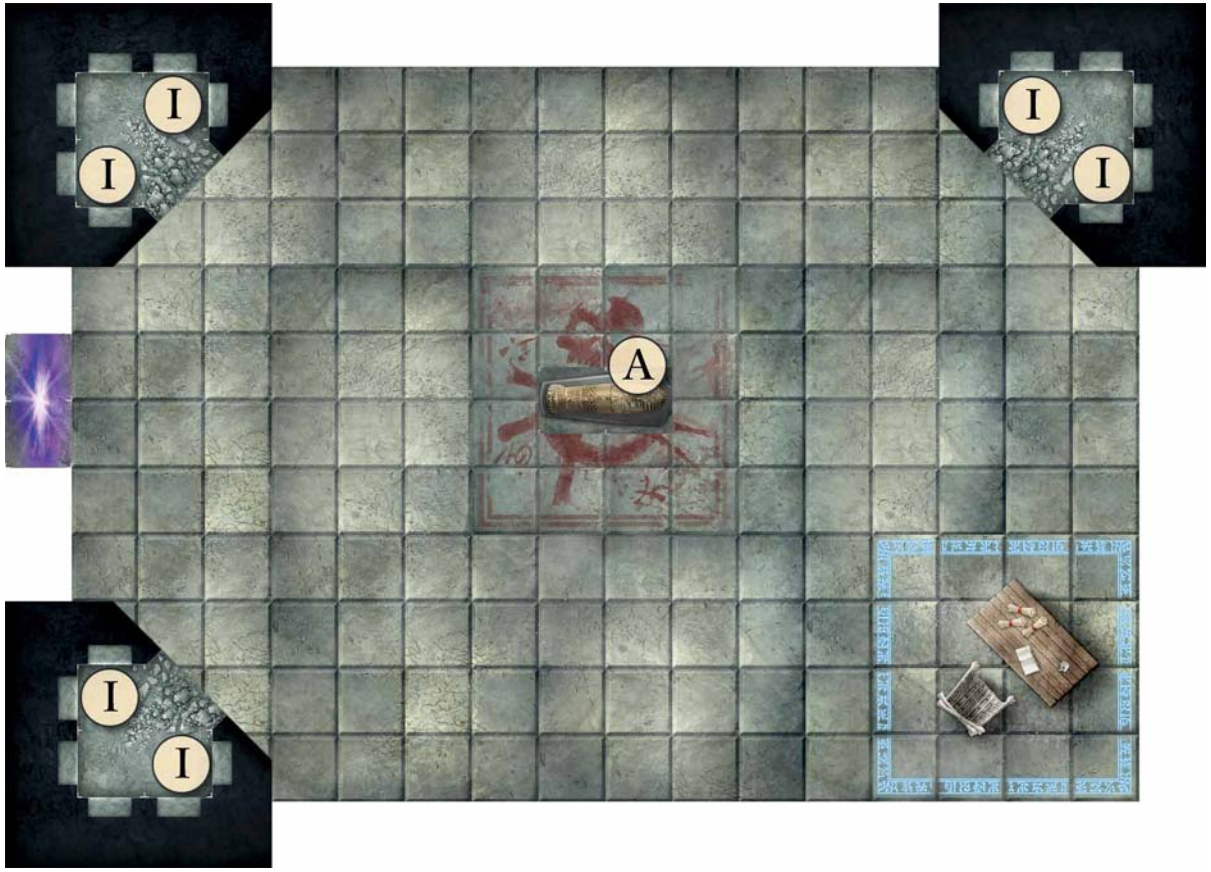
Illumination: Bright. The activated portal provides bright purplish light throughout the chamber.

Symbol of Asmodeus: The Wrathstone's presence makes the blood making up this symbol remain fresh. If the Wrathstone is removed from the chamber, the blood finally dries. The symbol area is difficult terrain, and anyone besides Agera subject to forced movement on the symbol must succeed on a saving throw or fall prone. A creature standing in a square of the symbol or the sarcophagus can score a critical hit on a natural roll of 19 or 20.

Portal: Initially, the portal that transports PCs into the chamber is one way. (DC 22 Arcana check to force the portal to work in reverse). The PCs can activate the portal in both directions by using the key found on the workbench.

Work Bench: The workbench contains a crystalline key that makes the portal operate both ways, Agera's Journal (which begins in Common but switches to Supernal toward the end, after the journal indicates Stormcrow Company found the Wrathstone). Prior to that point, the journal reads like any successful adventuring party's journal might read. After acquiring the Wrathstone, Agera becomes more and more paranoid, until she finally indicates she's had enough! The last entry states only, "Asmodeus, you have shown me the truth!"

Treasure Vaults: Rubble shown on the map here is difficult terrain. The vaults are smashed and looted (scorch marks and the smell of brimstone indicates devils may have been responsible), but among the debris, six parcels remain.



About the Author

Bruce R. Cordell is an Origins and ENnie award-winning game designer whose long list of professional credits include the new Forgotten Realms® *Campaign Guide*™, *Keep on the Shadowfell*™, *Draconomicon*™: *Chromatic Dragons* and *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*™. Bruce is also an author of Forgotten Realms novels, including *Plague of Spells*, first book in the new Abolethic Sovereignty series.

HEROIC
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The Oasis of the Golden Peacock

An adventure for 7th-level characters

"I have never known birds of different species to flock together. The very concept is unimaginable. Why, if that happened, we wouldn't stand a chance! How could we possibly hope to fight them?"

–Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*

by Tim Eagon

illustrations by Thomas Denmark
cartography by Kyle Hunter

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"The Oasis of the Golden Peacock" is a Dungeons & Dragons® adventure for five 7th-level characters. PCs who complete this adventure should gain enough experience to advance to 8th level by its conclusion. DMs can place the isolated oasis that is the main locale of this adventure in any desert in their campaign world.

Background

Roving bands of veiled eladrin have recently begun raiding desert settlements, ransacking libraries, and kidnapping prominent sages. Adventurers returning from the arid wilderness report that these same eladrin have plundered many of the prehistoric ruins that lie half-buried under the shifting sands.

These eladrin are ruthless mercenaries secretly acting at the behest of a mysterious female half-elf named Emrett Mazrid. With their aid, she has amassed an impressive collection of scholarly works. She is using these ill-gotten resources to translate the teachings of the Order of the Golden Peacock, an extinct circle of ancient druids fabled to have unlocked the secrets of immortality.

Long before the rise of Arkhosia or Bael Turath, the druids of the Order discovered an ancient oasis suffused with primal energy and teeming with all manner of avian life attracted to its power. What the druids didn't immediately realize is that the strange oasis is a primeval fey crossing. Soon after the Order arrived, inhabitants of the Feywild made their presence known. With their assistance, the Order channeled the oasis's ambient energy into a quartz obelisk that they erected upon an island at the center of the oasis, allowing them to harness its power to protect both the fey crossing and the surrounding wilderness. As the millennia passed, the Order's membership dwindled and their convictions faded. Eventually, they tired of their isolated existence and abandoned the oasis. The few living sages with any knowledge of that time seek to preserve the Order's lost legacy through a loose organization they call the Brotherhood of the Peacock.

By tracing a tenuous ancestry, Emrett Mazrid believes the oasis's legendary power is her birthright. She seeks to corrupt the power of the oasis and seize it for herself. To do so, she must decipher the Order's secrets before finally drenching the obelisk in the sacrificial blood of one of their descendants.

However, when Emrett and her mercenaries arrive at the oasis, they find it under the rule of its former guardian, an evil, ibis-headed sphinx named Hazar. Hazar is the Order's final, flawed creation, and her ability to command the oasis's avian inhabitants forces Emrett to forge a tenuous alliance with the sphinx. They grow to detest each other and both plan to betray the other, but for now, they have settled into an icy détente as they pursue their shared agenda.

Using the oasis as their base, Emrett's eladrin hirelings begin their raids, and she soon possesses what she needs to translate the Order's hieroglyphics. For her sacrificial victim, she selects a historian named Voor, one of the Brotherhood's most distinguished scholars. Voor long ago sank Emrett's academic ambitions by writing a scathing critique of her unorthodox and controversial dissertation, and as revenge she plans to torture, interrogate, and murder him in her vile ritual. With Hazar's assistance, she is only weeks away from realizing her dark ambitions.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins when members of the Brotherhood recruit the PCs to rescue Voor. No one knows exactly where the eladrin took him, but following their trail points the PCs in the direction of the oasis, which lies roughly a hundred miles southeast of the nearest permanent settlement. To reach it, the PCs must endure a long journey through the inhospitable desert, during which they face a band of Emrett's eladrin raiders.

Stealthily approaching the oasis, the PCs encounter a few eladrin mercenaries encamped at its northern edge. The PCs must avoid their vigilant gaze if they wish to stay unnoticed.

Once within the oasis, they find clues that allow them to piece together Emrett's plan. They can capture and interrogate Emrett's capricious dryad handmaiden, search Emrett's private tent and rummage through her personal papers, and—once rescued—Voor reveals all he knows of her plans. Eventually, the PCs learn of the obelisk and its significance to Emrett's schemes.

Emrett and Hazar are both vain, arrogant divas who can barely stand the other. Astute PCs who learn of this friction can exploit their mutual contempt and gain a temporary advantage. Any alliance with Hazar proves fleeting, for as soon as Emrett is dead and her remaining followers massacred, the sphinx betrays the PCs. Whatever happens, the PCs must defeat both of them to end their threat to the surrounding desert communities.

Starting the Adventure

News of the eladrins' raids has quickly spread along the caravan routes that connect the desert's scattered settlements. Even if they are new arrivals to the region, the PCs should already be familiar with recent events, perhaps witnessing their aftermath. In particular, grim accounts of Voor's kidnapping swirl throughout the region, and most believe that the scholar is surely dead.

Those opinions have not dissuaded a pair of the Brotherhood's junior members from seeking out adventurers to rescue their mentor. Akilah is the more gregarious of the two, with a diminutive frame topped by a tangled mop of black hair. Her portly counterpart, Farooq, is a young male with an odd, froglike countenance; when flustered, he makes croaking noises. The bookish duo privately approaches the PCs and humbly beseeches them for aid. Initially, they appeal to their sense of charity, but they can scrounge up to 500 gp worth of jewelry from their fellow students in a day's time (with promises of more to follow) if the PCs require additional incentive.

Unfortunately, neither Akilah nor Farooq can provide much information regarding Voor's whereabouts. Though Farooq witnessed the kidnapping, he did not see or hear much from his hiding place. He did glimpse the beautiful, veiled female eladrin who led the raid, and he believes that she knew Voor because of the familiar way she talked to him. She also took some of Voor's books, but Farooq does not know which ones because he had to flee when they burned Voor's villa.

To better motivate the PCs, it is best if they have an existing relationship with Voor. Given his well-known expertise in ancient history, Voor makes an excellent heroic-tier NPC contact that could be relevant in a previous adventure, and he can easily serve in the role of patron, hired sage, or mentor.

Major Quest: Rescuing Voor from Emrett's clutches gains the PCs 1,500 XP as well as any reward promised by Akilah and Farooq.

A Desert Expedition

Once the PCs agree to rescue Voor, their first priority should be equipping themselves for the treacherous journey ahead. Most goods are available for purchase at their standard prices in any of the settlements clinging to the edge of the desert. In particular, the PCs might want to purchase horses or camels for the journey. See *Adventurer's Vault* for more details on these mounts.

To reach the oasis, the PCs must traverse nearly 100 miles of desolate wilderness. Human adventurers walking at an average pace can make the trek in roughly a week, and mounted travel can shorten the journey to just over four days.

Reliable information on the eladrin is hard to come by. Their frequent raids have created a climate of fear and panic among the locals, and false rumors abound.

When the heroes are ready, Akilah and Farooq guide them to the site of one of the eladrins' recent raids. They strike every two to three days, so this trail is only a day old when the PCs begin their pursuit.

Sprinkle the journey with descriptions of crumbling ruins buried in sand, soaring vultures, sweltering days and frigid nights, sudden dust storms, and frequent bird sightings. The only significant event is an ambush by the retreating eladrin on the third day of their journey.

Unless the PCs took extraordinary measures to avoid discovery, the eladrin spot them and send a small group to circle back and ambush them, attacking as they pass through a desolate erg (sandy desert).

Tactical Encounter: D1. First Blood (page 45).

The Oasis of the Golden Peacock

The oasis is a mysterious, primal locale that has existed perhaps since the dawn of creation. After its discovery, the Order's hierophants speculated that the oasis was spontaneously created by a previously unknown fey crossing, a hidden portal to the Feywild. The torrent of primal energy released by this supposed portal had another, unexplained effect; it attracted all sorts of feathered creatures to it, and birds became the oasis's prevailing form of wildlife, a dominance that continues to this day.

Today, the teardrop-shaped oasis is a pristine island of lush vegetation surrounded by a sea of arid scrubland. At its extremes, the oasis is nearly a mile long and half a mile wide; a shallow lake surrounded by a narrow strip of soggy marshland lies at its center. As one moves farther from the lake, the ground becomes firmer, reeds give way to tall grass and flowering shrubs, and small copses of date palms and acacia trees shade the landscape.

The prominent feature of the oasis is a sandstone ridge that rises precipitously from the desert floor. Towering nearly 300 feet above the oasis, it wraps around its eastern edge, shielding it from the harshest desert winds. PCs can ascend the lower slopes with relative ease. Once they progress more than 30 feet up the cliff face, however, crumbling rocks and thorny vines make climbing treacherous; further progress requires a DC 15 Athletics check each turn. (Unhurried PCs can take 10 on this check, but this is impossible in combat.) The windswept summit is a relatively flat plateau worn smooth by erosion. It offers a commanding view of the surrounding landscape but little else.

Immediately upon their arrival, the PCs find that avian life pervades the oasis's every nook and cranny. Ibises, flamingos, and storks stalk the marshlands as ducks, geese, swans, gulls, and other waterfowl swim lazily across the lake's surface. Magnificent peacocks and simple partridges strut through the tall grass while multitudes of gaily-colored songbirds nest in the trees above. Hawks, ravens, eagles, owls, and other raptors perch high atop the cliffs, which are also home to the blood hawks and comet tail eagles that serve as the oasis's first line of defense (see "The Sentinels" for more information). The constant chirping, squawking, and cawing makes hearing difficult. Unless noted otherwise, all listening-based Perception checks made within the oasis suffer a –2 penalty.

The mystical effect that attracts the birds extends for hundreds of miles in all directions, strengthening as one draws closer to its source. It affects any living creature with feathers, and even some that merely maintain a birdlike form. Such creatures experience an instinctual urge to migrate to the oasis and possess a dim awareness of its general location, but they are not compelled to act.

The Oasis and Magic

The arcane and primal energy saturating the oasis generates odd effects, the most noticeable being the oasis's overwhelming allure to feathered creatures. A brief summary of its effects is provided below, and more detail on fey crossings and ley lines is available in *Manual of the Planes*™.

Fey Crossing: The entire oasis is a fey crossing, a region where the boundaries between the mortal world and the Feywild grow thin. Now and again, inhabitants of the Feywild inadvertently enter the mortal world through the fey crossing, but the reverse entails deliberate action. Normally, those wishing to transport themselves to the Feywild must either descend through the portal that lies at the bottom of the lake (see Area O7) or cast a fey passage ritual within the confines of the oasis.

Ley Lines: Several extremely powerful ley lines intersect near the oasis's underwater portal to the Feywild. As a result, a PC performing a ritual with the key skill of Arcana or Nature within the oasis gains a +2 bonus to any skill check called for in the ritual. The ritual's component cost is also reduced to 75% of the normal cost. At the DMs discretion, the quartz obelisk can increase these bonuses or eliminate the component cost altogether; in that case, there should be other costs or risks associated with casting rituals in this manner.

The Sentinels

The birds that flock to the oasis are merely standoffish, but the blood hawks and comet tail eagles that soar aloft are openly hostile. For centuries, these vicious raptors have served Hazar as sentries, keeping their sharp gaze trained downward and constantly scouring the region for intruders. As PCs near the oasis, these sentinels are an ever-present threat looming overhead.

A total of 30 blood hawks and 12 comet tail eagles circle above the oasis and its environs, patrolling in groups of five and four respectively. During daylight hours, the PCs automatically notice these birds soaring above the oasis from a mile or more away. If the PCs draw attention to themselves (such as by flying toward or near the oasis, or by using fire or creating light at night), a patrol automatically detects them and investigates. If they approach at night or use magic to avoid detection, make hourly Stealth checks for them opposed by the passive Perception of the blood hawks and the comet tail eagles. The sentinels normally patrol at an altitude of 500 feet, so the PCs gain a +2 bonus to their checks. Once characters enter the oasis, its tall grass and plentiful trees provide enough concealment to make hiding feasible.

Unless noted otherwise, if the sentinels discover the PCs, they attack. Because they frequently defend the oasis from wandering predators, most of its inhabitants, including the other sentinel patrols, ignore the sounds of battle unless something unusual occurs.

The one notable exception is if the PCs scale the ridge. Once the PCs reach the mid-point of their climb, they automatically attract the attention of the sentinel patrol that nests among the rocks. The sentinels strike without mercy, fighting to the death to protect their aerie. If the PCs continue to climb or reach the top of the ridge, the sentinels try to overwhelm them at a rate of one patrol per minute until the intruding PCs are killed or driven off, or all the sentinels are defeated.

If the PCs vanquish four or more sentinel patrols under any circumstances, Hazar takes notice and joins her minions to confront the PCs. See Area O4 for more information on the sphinx and her reactions to this event.

Encounter Level 6 (XP 1,250)

✦ 5 blood hawk sentinels

Blood Hawk Sentinel	**Level 6 Skirmisher**
Small natural beast	XP 250 each
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +4
HP 67; **Bloodied** 33	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 17	
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 6	
⊕ **Claw Rake** (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 damage, and the target takes ongoing 2 damage, or ongoing 5 damage if the blood hawk sentinel is bloodied (save ends).	
⸸ **Flyby Attack**	
The blood hawk sentinel flies 6 squares and makes a *claw rake* attack at any point during that movement. The blood hawk sentinel does not provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 13 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 11 (+3)	**Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 7 (+1)

Encounter Level 5 (XP 1,200)

✦ 4 comet tail eagles

Comet Tail Eagle	**Level 7 Brute**
Medium elemental beast (fire)	XP 300
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
Dissipating Heat (Fire) aura 1; after a comet tail eagle charges, any creature that enters or begins its turn within the aura takes 5 fire damage. The aura lasts until the beginning of the comet tail eagle's next turn.	
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 17	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 20 fire	
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 10 (hover); see also *comet fall*	
⊕ **Talon** (standard; at-will)	
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.	
Comet Fall	
A comet tail eagle does not provoke opportunity attacks while charging, and after it charges, it can shift 3 squares as a free action.	
Fiery Impact ✦ Fire	
For every square a comet tail eagle moves while charging, it deals 2 extra fire damage on a hit.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 14 (+6)	**Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

O1. Eladrin Encampment

This makeshift encampment consists of four blue triangular tents arranged in a semicircle around a smoldering fire pit. A nearby grove of palm trees shields the campsite from the oppressive heat and serves as home to a small colony of chattering, parrotlike birds sporting vivid red, orange, and yellow plumage. Ten camels graze nearby.

The majority of Emrett's eladrin mercenaries are away carrying out their various assignments, so only a small contingent remains at the oasis at any one time. The eladrin have pitched their tents under the shade provided by a grove of date palms. They like to relax around the fire pit while smoking their hookahs,

Who Hates Whom?

The oasis seethes with conflict because most of its inhabitants hate each other. Although many of these conflicts are explored throughout the adventure, some DMs might wish to expand upon them. Here is a general summary of the various factions and their attitudes toward each other.

The Eladrin: The eladrin inhabiting Area O1 have no great love for their overbearing employer, Emrett, and they so detest her untrustworthy quickling and spriggan stooges that it is relatively easy to provoke a conflict. They are initially neutral toward Hazar, but if convinced of what the sphinx plans to do to them once Emrett is dead, they swear a vendetta against her.

Hazar: Hazar hates all the oasis's recent visitors but bides her time, looking for allies strong enough to destroy Emrett and her minions (including the mercenary eladrin), but too weak to oppose her. Except for Emrett's pet comet tail, Rami, all the birds in the oasis follow Hazar's lead. Hazar might ally with the PCs to destroy Emrett, but she ultimately turns on them.

Emrett's Henchmen: A healthy fear of Emrett's wrath keeps her henchmen's destructive impulses in check, but that harmony disintegrates if she dies. If given the opportunity (and if they feel that they can get away with it), they happily kill any eladrin that fall into their clutches. They share their mistress's attitude toward Hazar, but they are too terrified of the sphinx to express that fear, let alone act on it.

Emrett: Emrett views all her minions as expendable, and she hates Hazar as much as the sphinx hates her. She is too fanatical to ever agree to ally with an outside party; besides, she spends the majority of her time in Area O6, far away from the oasis's other inhabitants.

eating dates, and sipping cups of gahwa or tea. Seven eladrin and one of their tribe's leaders, a swordmage named Thurraya, rest here.

Tactical Encounter: O1. Eladrin Encampment (page 48).

O2. The Love Nest

Upon his arrival, a fierce eladrin warrior named Saqr became smitten with Emrett's handmaiden, a capricious dryad named Taalah, and the two became lovers. Although Saqr has genuinely fallen in love, Taalah continues the relationship mainly to satisfy her lusts and to offset her growing boredom, since Emrett rarely has any work for her.

Saqr and Taalah spend their time cavorting in a small clearing south of the lake. To keep out the prying eyes of his fellow tribesmen, Saqr unfurled bolts of stolen saffron-colored silk and strung it between the trunks of the surrounding trees, creating a makeshift circular barrier.

If the PCs cross the barrier, read:

On the other side of the saffron barrier is a small clearing. A trio of snow-white peacocks roams through the knee-high grass and glance curiously at you. At the center of the clearing is a rumpled bedroll; discarded clothes are strewn all over the place.

Tactical Encounter: O2. The Love Nest (page 51).

O3. Emrett's Abode

Emrett situated her campsite atop a small, wooded knoll northeast of the lake. She occupies the only tent, and her henchmen sleep on the ground or on hammocks woven from vines. Emrett devotes the majority of her time to studying the obelisk, retiring to her tent for only a few hours of rest each night. During the day, a pair of spriggan giantsouls guard the campsite while a satyr piper and a quickling runner idly entertain themselves with a game of dice.

Tactical Encounter: O3. Emrett's Abode (page 54).

When the PCs investigate the tent, read the following:

A cot cocooned in mosquito netting squats in one corner, and tucked underneath it is a small wooden chest. Next to the cot is a desk and chair, both covered in stacks of books. A large armoire stands across from it. In the far corner of the tent, someone has constructed what appears to be an altar to some dark power.

Chest: The chest is unlocked. It contains expensive cosmetics and vials of perfume collectively worth 200 gp.

Armoire: The oaken armoire is unlocked. Attached to the inside of the cabinet door is a full-length glass mirror. Hanging within it are eight fashionable outfits (worth 75 gp each), mainly silk abayas, dresses, and saris. At the bottom of the armoire are four pairs of equally stylish shoes worth 50 gp per pair.

Desk: The books stacked on the desk deal with the subjects of history and magic, and one volume in particular should interest the PCs. It is Emrett's handwritten diary. Unfortunately, she trapped the tome.

Curse of the Devouring Darkness Level 7 Warder
Trap XP 300

As you flip through the black, leather-bound manuscript, the neatly penned text rapidly begins to dissolve, writhing and coagulating into a mass of ugly, black splotches that begin to bulge outward. With a loud tearing sound, the book ruptures and a droning swarm of black beetles explodes from the ripped pages.

Trap: Emrett safeguards her personal diary with a powerful magical curse. When a creature other than Emrett opens the diary, the curse activates.

Perception
✦ DC 23: The character feels an uncomfortable buzzing sensation when they handle the diary.

Additional Skill: Arcana
✦ DC 19: The character senses the curse's dark aura, providing a +2 bonus to Arcana checks made to disable it.

Additional Skill: Thievery
✦ DC 19: The character detects a faint hint of dried poison, providing a +2 bonus to Thievery checks made to disable the curse.

Trigger
When a creature other than Emrett tries to open her diary, the curse activates.

Attack
Opportunity Action **Close** burst 1
Targets: All creatures in burst
Attack: +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d6 + 4 acid and poison damage and the target is blinded (save ends)
Miss: Half damage and the target is blinded (save ends)
Effect: The diary reappears where it was left, closed and intact.

Countermeasures
✦ A character holding the diary can dispel the curse with a DC 23 Thievery check or a DC 20 Arcana check.
Special: No one other than Emrett can read the diary until the curse is dispelled.

The diary, though written in Elven and full of intellectual self-aggrandizement, contains all the information provided in the "Adventure Background" except for the identity of Emrett's patron, who she obliquely refers to as "My Master" or "His Highness." It also reveals her plans to betray Hazar (who she describes in particularly unflattering language); if the PCs present this evidence to the sphinx, she might turn against her erstwhile ally.

Altar: Emrett built this stone altar with magic and dedicated it to a fey aspect of Tiamat, the goddess of wealth, envy, and greed; a DC 20 Religion check identifies the exotic iconography. A triptych painting depicting sinister looking nymphs and satyrs cavorting under a swollen full moon (worth 250 gp) serves as a backdrop. Arrayed before it are three ceremonial objects: a cold iron dagger; a silver chalice studded with moonstones (worth 250 gp); and an egg-shaped, multi-faceted black gem held up by a delicate silver frame (worth 350 gp).

O4. Hazar's Lair

As the self-proclaimed ruler of the oasis, Hazar has selected an appropriately regal perch for herself, building her nest on a sheltered ledge overlooking a 200-foot vertical plunge. To reach her nest, the PCs need to fly or scale the cliff; in either case, they risk the wrath of the sentinels.

Once the PCs reach the ledge, read or paraphrase the following:

A crevice digs into the sheer face of the cliff, forming a recessed rock shelf nearly 20 feet deep that overlooks the oasis and blocks the worst of the desert sun. Some sort of monstrous bird has woven a large nest out of brush and tall grasses, tucking it against the rear wall; discarded fish bones litter the ground.

Hazar recently retreated to her aerie to sulk after a translation dispute led to a violent quarrel with Emrett. She now divides her time between analyzing a set of papyrus scrolls she took in a huff from Emrett's collection and preening her feathers while contemplating her partner's violent death. Occasionally, she leaves her nest to fly briefly among her subjects, allowing the PCs to catch an early glimpse of her gliding overhead surrounded by a flock of attentive birds.

Long ago, Hazar was an accomplished sage who was exiled after murdering a rival in a fit of rage. She discovered the oasis just as the last druids of the Order of the Golden Peacock were preparing to leave, and they requested that she serve at its guardian in their absence (in exchange for a promise of sanctuary).

As their final collective act, the Order gathered at the sacred obelisk and cast a powerful ritual that transformed Hazar into her current, ibis-headed form and invested her with command over the oasis's avian inhabitants. However, as the Order did not fully trust the exiled sphinx, their ritual also hid the quartz obelisk from her senses and memory.

Emrett's recent intrusion presented Hazar with a dilemma: She loathed sharing her realm with another, but Emrett's revelation of the obelisk's existence and her proposed alliance was too intellectually tantalizing for Hazar to refuse. She plans to betray Emrett and keep the obelisk for herself, gaining revenge on the druids that blinded her to it. However, their egos clash constantly, and clever PCs might be able to turn Hazar into an ally (albeit an untrustworthy one).

Skill Challenge: O4. Smoothing Ruffled Feathers (page 56).

Tactical Encounter: O4. Hazar's Lair (page 58).

If the PCs manage to destroy four or more sentinel patrols, a livid but secretly intrigued Hazar quits her brooding and searches the oasis for them with the aid

of a surviving sentinel patrol. If she locates the PCs, she lands close by and demands an immediate apology, but she attacks only if the PCs act in an insulting manner. Assuming they do not immediately attack the sphinx, the PCs have a chance to participate in the above skill challenge.

05. Voor's Prison

Someone has burned away the heavy undergrowth, producing a barren patch of scorched earth surrounded by a lush expanse of towering elephant grass and scattered trees. Near its center is a cramped cage, its bars formed from twisted tree roots that have seemingly erupted from the soil below. Inside the strange enclosure, a single human-sized figure wearing rags slumps dejectedly against the bars.

Voor, the kidnapped member of the Brotherhood of the Peacock, is imprisoned within the cage. By the time the PCs reach the oasis, he is in terrible physical shape and suffers from fatigue brought on by heat exhaustion and sleep deprivation. Luckily, his formidable mental resolve has kept him from breaking under Emrett's torturous interrogations, much to her displeasure.

Since he is crucial to her plans, Emrett has Voor constantly monitored to insure both his continued survival and captivity. Four of Emrett's trusted sprigan henchmen watch over the stubborn academic. Finally, a powerful iron cobra has wrapped itself around the cage and maintains a constant vigil.

Emrett keeps the strange cage housing Voor locked at all times (Thievery DC 19) and carries the only key. It is one of Hazar's creations; the magically enhanced tree roots that form its frame have the resiliency of steel and mend themselves once damaged. Moreover, anyone within 10 feet of the cage and outside its

confines, who audibly utters the correct command word ("seal" in Elven), causes the roots to swell and fuse together, creating a nearly solid enclosure. The cage shrinks back to its standard form if a second command word is similarly spoken ("release" in Elven).

Unlucky prisoners trapped inside the solid enclosure during daylight hours immediately begin to suffer as the temperature spikes to 110° F. They must succeed on a DC 21 Endurance check once every minute or lose one healing surge; creatures that have no healing surges remaining lose hit points equal to their level. The sweltering heat, and its attendant dangers, dissipates once the cage reverts to its normal form or someone releases its prisoner.

Tactical Encounter: O5. Voor's Prison (page 60).

Meeting Voor

If rescued, Voor hastily thanks his saviors and readily accepts any assistance they provide, but his thoughts rapidly turn to preventing the perversion of his ancestors' legacy. Half-crazed with desperation, Voor pleads with the PCs to stop Emrett, launching breathlessly into a meticulous recounting of his entire harrowing ordeal. It takes several minutes for Voor to regain his composure, and once he finally does, he seems more cogent and apologizes for his outburst.

Voor is grimly determined to stop Emrett, whatever the cost, and readily assumes the PCs will help. If they hesitate, he appeals to whatever works best, and if the situation appears especially dire, is not above using his *charm person* ability to gain an ally. Even though he is next to useless in combat, Voor stubbornly insists on accompanying the PCs and fully participating in the remainder of the adventure. Assuming the PCs consent to help, he can provide the following information:

- If the PCs are not yet fully aware of Emrett's plans, Voor can provide a broad overview.
- Voor can guide the PCs to Area O6; however, he fails to mention the illusion concealing the obelisk, which might cause them to doubt his sanity.
- If asked why Emrett selected him to be her sacrifice, he tells of how he publicly rebuked her earlier writings, calling them "morally repugnant," and dooming any chance at her having a respectable academic career.
- He witnessed Emrett and Hazar's latest spat and noted their overall frosty relations. He counsels the PCs that they might turn the sphinx against her ally if they can provide her with incentive.
- Finally, Voor theorizes about the likely devastating consequences of Emrett's ritual on the oasis, describing how it will generate a tainted feedback loop that will forever corrupt its natural energy, not only destroying its vibrant ecosystem, but also turning it into a fetid pool of evil that will menace the surrounding desert and its peoples.

Voor **Level 7 Minion Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP -
Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 21; **Fortitude** 17; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 21
Speed 5
⊕ **Arcane Strike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**
+11 vs. Reflex; 4 force damage.
Charm Person (standard; encounter) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 5; +11 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). Voor cannot make a dominated target attack another creature.
Feyblooded Prescience (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Voor can roll a saving throw to avoid damage from the attack. If he succeeds, he can teleport 2 squares.
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven
Skills Arcana +12, Diplomacy +10, History +12, Insight +10, Nature +11
Str 8 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 10 (+3) **Int** 19 (+7) **Cha** 15 (+5)
Equipment tattered robes

Though Voor is a bookish middle-aged male human, his face is strangely youthful, graced by delicate, elfin features now marred by numerous bloody gashes and swollen, purple bruises. His normally wispy white beard and thick head of equally white hair are soiled and matted, and he is still wearing his damaged bifocals. Normally, Voor is kindhearted, intelligent, and witty, but he is sullen and withdrawn for days after this nightmarish experience.

O6. Lakeside

The oasis's magical emanations flow outward from the lake, which is why the original Order built the obelisk on the small, tree-covered islet at its heart. They didn't understand that the lake is a portal pool (*Manual of the Planes* page 16) connected to the Feywild; anyone swimming down to its lowest depths, 40 feet below the surface, is transported to a similar lake in that plane. What lies beyond the portal is beyond the scope of this adventure.

On the main map of the oasis, areas adjacent to the lake contain sodden, mosquito-infested fens covered by thick layers of muck and choked by a tangle of reeds and gnarled trees. The waters of the lake are relatively calm, and the sandy bottom is visible in all but its deepest spots. Within 25 feet of shore, the lake is shallow; Medium sized creatures can wade through it, treating it as difficult terrain, though Small (and smaller) creatures must swim. Beyond that distance, the water is 20 to 40 feet deep, requiring DC 10 Athletics checks to swim.

O6. The Isle of the Obelisk

To safeguard their work, the Order siphoned a fraction of the obelisk's power to generate a potent illusion that veils the entire island, masking any trace of the obelisk (as well any other structures), supplanting it instead with an unremarkable view of a landscape consisting of a few date palms surrounded by curtain of tall reeds. To notice that the landscape is not quite right (it sometimes shimmers like a mirage), the PCs' passive Insight check must beat DC 19. Actively disbelieving the illusion requires a minor action to make an active Insight check against DC 21; if either Hazar or Voor have revealed the existence of the obelisk, the PCs gain a +2 bonus to their Insight check.

When the PCs pierce the illusion, read or paraphrase the following:

A large copse of palm trees fades away, replaced by a towering obelisk apparently sculpted from a massive block of rose quartz. Even from this distance, you can make out the softly shimmering hieroglyphs scrawled on its surface. Someone has pitched a spacious tent a few feet away from it.

The obelisk is at the center of Emrett's operations in the oasis, and it is where she spends the greater part of her day diligently studying and transcribing its magic hieroglyphs. She keeps the impressive library amassed by her eladrin mercenaries in the nearby tent.

To safeguard the site, a fang golem prowls the island, assisted by a pair of spriggan thorns. Each morning, Emrett joins them and resumes her arduous task, usually finishing several hours after sunset. Her pet, a comet tail eagle named Rami, accompanies her and circles overhead while she works.

Tactical Encounter: O6. The Isle of the Obelisk (page 63).

The Obelisk

The Order of the Golden Peacock sculpted the 80-foot tall obelisk from an immense pillar of rose quartz that they conjured from deep beneath the earth, and then channeled the oasis's primal energy into it, creating a vast repository of power that they could draw upon. To commemorate their achievement, they recorded their collective knowledge for future generations, preserving it within the obelisk's polished surfaces.

Hieroglyphs cover the entire length of each of the obelisk's four facets. The Order chronicled their lore in a mixture of tongues, favoring now archaic dialects of Draconic, Elven, Supernal, and Primordial, with each 2' × 2' section encompassing hieroglyphs corresponding to a particular language (roll a d4 to determine the language randomly). A modern speaker can translate the related hieroglyphs with two hours of study; otherwise, a DC 25 Intelligence check can interpret a similar fragment in 8 hours. For nonspeakers, Emrett's library provides additional resources to assist in translations (see below).

Painstakingly translating the hieroglyphs can be a daunting task, but because of the Order's magic wards, it is a more reliable method than divination. Anyone casting a divination ritual in an effort to translate the hieroglyphics or learn more about the obelisk suffers a –10 penalty to any associated skill checks.

Once someone has fully translated the hieroglyphs, they can learn to utilize the obelisk's power under the proper conditions; however, Emrett is following an alternate path of her own wicked design.

The Tent

The large tent is another of Hazar's magic creations, built specifically to warehouse countless ancient tomes. Underneath its canopy, the temperature stays a comfortable 65°F and the humidity is practically nonexistent; four brass oil lamps dangling from the canopy provide the necessary illumination. All creatures and objects within the tent gain resist 10 fire.

A pair of long wooden tables, running parallel to each other, dominates the length of the tent. All sorts of manuscripts cover the tables, including leather-bound tomes, clay cuneiform tablets, delicate papyrus scrolls, and charcoal rubbings taken from walls of various ruins, all meticulously sorted by subject. Anyone consulting the library while making an Arcana, Dungeoneering, History, Nature, or Religion check can add a +4 bonus to their roll; additionally, Emrett's comprehensive catalog of ancient linguistics tracts grants a +6 bonus to Intelligence checks made to decipher the obelisk's hieroglyphics. Together, the collection is worth over 10,000 gp to a wealthy collector or university, but it would be difficult to transport across the desert.

A squat writing desk buried under an avalanche of papers, writing utensils, and still more books sits at the north end of the tent, directly in front of a slate chalkboard crammed with diagrams and notations. If the PCs sift through the papers and examine the chalkboard, they find that Emrett is half finished translating the obelisk. Annotations made in the margins provide complete details of her plans to corrupt the oasis, revealed by a DC 20 Arcana check.

Lastly, some magic items probably interest the PCs. Lying under a stack of books is a locked footlocker (DC 20 Thievery); it contains a level 9 and a level 10 magic item (a tome implement would be a perfect fit for at least one of these items).

Emrett Mazrid

Emrett, the PCs chief antagonist, is a poseur of the highest order, a volatile mixture of narcissism, delusion, and rampant insecurity. Her arrogance (or as she puts it, "noble bearing"), affectations ("suitable behavior befitting high society") and demands ("the benefits of my station") would be comical if she was not also a highly intelligent and ambitious sociopath.

Although she was a gifted student and had won scholarships to prestigious universities, Emrett's academic work failed to gain the recognition that she thought it properly deserved. Nonetheless, someone did note her deepening fascination with the darker aspects of the natural world, and enigmatic vassals of a being known as the "Emerald Suzerain" began to visit her dreams, whispering terrible and best-forgotten secrets into her entranced mind. With their blessing, she recorded their startling revelations, incorporating them into her doctorate. After publishing excerpts, she finally achieved some level of notoriety among the more outré intellectual circles, but any possibility of a respectable career shattered when Voor penned his critique, forever branding Emrett "irresponsible" and "dangerous."

Her career prospects in tatters, Emrett's nightly guests once again called upon her, rescuing her from intellectual oblivion by escorting her before the court of their sovereign, a powerful archfey. An enthralled Emrett instantly pledged her fealty and for once in her life, she humbly served another, rising through the ranks to become one of her master's favorite mortal servants.

Once she was ready, her master summoned Emrett before him, and commanded that she journey to the oasis to seize its power for herself. In his twisted worldview, the good-hearted fey that had collaborated with the Order of the Golden Peacock were traitors who foolishly betrayed the secrets of their own kind to the pathetic humans. He had patiently waited for thousands of years, and the time was finally right to take his revenge.

For her part, Emrett zealously leapt at the opportunity to once again prove herself worthy of her master's favor. In her warped mind, she has come to fervently believe that he chose her for this task because she is the rightful heir to the Order's legacy. That it allowed her to take revenge on her leading detractor is further confirmation of her grand destiny.

Concluding the Adventure

Since she is fanatically devoted to her cause, slaying Emrett is the only way to end the threat she poses to the oasis; if she somehow survives, she bides her time and gathers additional resources, beginning anew at her earliest opportunity. If they do dispose of Emrett, the PCs have to contend with Hazar because the unpredictable sphinx is far too territorial to allow them to remain alive.

If Voor survives, he eventually recuperates from his ordeal and dedicates the remainder of his life to studying the oasis. Assuming it survives, he tries to appropriate Emrett's library and put it to good use, but he graciously permits the PCs to take whatever they desire. Lastly, in addition to whatever Akilah and Farooq promised, an indebted Brotherhood reward the PCs an additional 1,000 gp for Voor's safe return, and they make their libraries available to the PCs any time they need use of their vast archives.

Finally, what if the PCs fail and Emrett completes her ritual? In that event, the quartz obelisk darkens, becoming black like onyx, and its life-giving properties that permeate the oasis begin to twist, rapidly transforming the verdant paradise into a warped, nightmarish landscape that becomes a haven for evil fey. Perversely, the oasis remains inviting to birds, but only to those of the nastiest and most evil disposition. Rectifying the situation and finding a way to halt, or even reverse, this new menace would be an adventure in itself.

Captured

The fate of captured PCs largely depends on which faction takes them prisoner. The eladrin view captives as potential slaves and try to keep any hidden from Emrett. They securely bind, gag, and blindfold any captured PCs, and then throw them into one of the tents in Area O1 (their weapons and equipment are kept in another tent). In a few days, a larger band of eladrin warriors visits the oasis and secretly whisks any prisoners away; in the meantime, give the PCs every opportunity to escape.

Although being the eladrins' prisoner is obviously unpleasant, Emrett's henchmen are far harsher in their treatment. The spriggans savagely beat any captured PCs and then force them to share a cramped cage with Voor (Area O5); to make matters worse, Emrett has their equipment divided between Areas O3 and O7. For the next several days, Emrett directs the spriggans to cruelly torture and interrogate the PCs before finally executing them. Encourage the PCs to attempt an escape before that can happen, possibly by requiring a skill challenge to free themselves from their confinement and evade their pursuers. This would be an ideal time to introduce Hazar; perhaps the intrigued sphinx could provide furtive assistance to the fugitives in return for certain favors...

Encounter D1: First Blood

Encounter Level 8 (XP 1,800)

Setup

Najid (N)
War camel (C)
2 eladrin mamluks (M)
Eladrin dune sniper (D)

When the eladrin notice the PCs several miles behind, following their trail through the desert, the raiding party scatters in various directions, but not before an elite squad of warriors circles back to prepare an ambush.

A veteran warrior named Najid, mounted on a war camel, leads the attack, and he keeps a large dune between himself and the approaching PCs while the other three eladrin lurk behind its crest, weapons drawn. The eladrin hope to gain surprise, and they patiently wait for the PCs to either scale the dune's windward slope (to an elevation of 30 feet) or circle around to its leeward side before springing their trap.

When the PCs reach the base of the dune, read:

As you near the foot of a massive dune, you notice that the tracks that you have been following diverge in several different directions. Some round the wide base of the dune, but others continue straight up its steep, windward slope.

Perception
DC 23: *From behind the crest of the dune, you momentarily spy a strip of dark cloth fluttering in the breeze.*

PCs that notice the concealed eladrin can act during the surprise round; do not place the eladrin on the map until they reveal themselves or the PCs detect them.

When the eladrin mamluks attack, read:

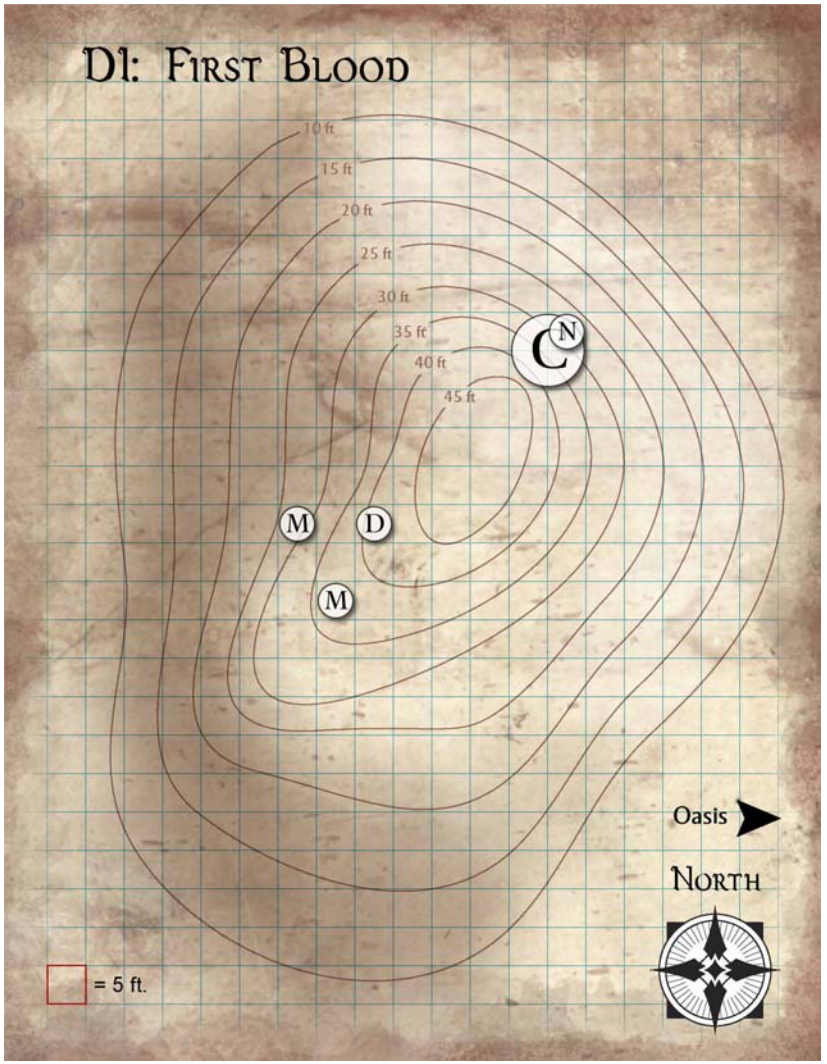
With a piercing cry, two slim eladrin leap out from behind the dune and rush toward you wielding massive scimitars. They wear flowing tan robes over their gleaming chainmail and headwraps that obscure their faces.

A second later, a similarly attired eladrin gallops into view astride a powerfully built camel, the keen tip of his lance pointed directly toward you.

Tactics

During the surprise round, Najid and the eladrin mamluks spend a move action to close with the PCs, and the dune sniper pops out of hiding to make a *rapid shot* attack with her longbow. Once they are within a few squares of the frontline PCs, the mamluks *fey step* into their midst and use *dance of the desert blades* to wreak havoc on lightly armored foes. If flanked, the mamluks use *tower of sand* to push the PCs out of position; otherwise, they use it after becoming bloodied. The mamluks' code of honor requires them to either vanquish their foes in battle or die trying.

The dune sniper remains hidden behind the crest of the dune, appearing at various spots to pepper the PCs with *rapid shot*. The dune acts as blocking terrain



Najid (N) **Level 8 Elite Solider**
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 700

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 180; **Bloodied** 90
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 19
Saving Throws +2; +7 against charm effects
Speed 6; see also *fey step*
Action Points 1

⊕ **Lance** (standard; usable only while mounted; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

⊕ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage (crit 2d8 + 15).

⸸ **Dismounted Wrath** (standard; usable only while dismounted; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Najid makes two scimitar attacks, which score critical hits on a natural roll of 19-20.

⸸ **Relentless Charge** (standard; requires a lance, usable only while mounted and charging; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Najid can teleport 5 squares. If mounted, Najid can also teleport his mount.

Mounted Combat
While Najid rides a creature, he gains access to any special mount abilities it confers to its rider, plus the creature can also make Athletics, Acrobatics, Endurance, and Stealth checks using Najid's base skill check bonus rather its own if Najid's is higher.

Tower of Sand (standard; unusable while mounted; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
Najid absorbs the sand underfoot to fuel a magical growth spurt; Najid becomes Large, occupying 4 squares instead of 1. Creatures and objects in the squares that Najid comes to occupy are pushed 1 square. Najid's reach becomes 2 and he gains a +5 bonus to damage rolls. Najid can revert to its normal form as a free action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Athletics +15, Endurance +13, Nature +13
Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+8)
Con 18 (+8) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment chainmail, lance, scimitar

when she hides behind it, and it provides her with cover when she emerges to snipe at the PCs. The dune sniper enters melee only if forced to, preferring instead to *fey step* out of danger and resume her ranged attacks. If the battle clearly turns against the eladrin or she finds herself in great personal danger, the dune sniper assumes *dust form* and flees.

Najid prefers to remain mounted during the battle, using *relentless charge* against any strong melee characters. If a PC slays his war camel, Najid becomes enraged and spends his action point to use *tower of sand* before going on the offensive, concentrating his *dismounted wrath* upon the PC that struck the killing blow. Like his mamluk subordinates, Najid fights to the death.

If the PCs flee, the surviving eladrin stalk and harass them until they reach the safety of civilization.

Najid's War Camel (C) **Level 5 Brute**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 200

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 78; **Bloodied** 39
AC 17; **Fortitude** 18; **Reflex** 17; **Will** 16
Speed 8 (earth walk)

⊕ **Kick** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage.

⸸ **Trample** (standard; at-will)
The war camel can move up to its speed and enter enemies' spaces. This movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the war camel must end its movement in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, the war camel makes a trample attack: +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Charger (while mounted by a friendly rider of 5th level or higher; at-will) ✦ **Mount**
The war camel grants its rider a +5 bonus to damage rolls on charge attacks.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Endurance +11
Str 21 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Eladrin Dune Sniper (D) **Level 7 Lurker**
Medium fey humanoid XP 300

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision
HP 61; **Bloodied** 30
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19; **Reflex** 22; **Will** 19
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects
Speed 6; see also *dust form* and *fey step*

⊕ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage (crit 1d8 + 14).

⊕ **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.

Rapid Shot (standard; at-will)
The eladrin dune sniper makes two longbow attacks.

Sniper
When an eladrin dune sniper makes a ranged attack from hiding and misses, it is still considered to be hiding.

Dust Form (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The eladrin dune sniper becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 8 (hover). It can enter and move through a porous obstacle that would otherwise prevent movement (such as a door or cracked window). *Sustain Standard:* The effect persists.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The eladrin dune sniper can teleport 5 squares.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Acrobatics +14, Stealth +14
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 22 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 14 (+5) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, longbow, scimitar, quiver of 30 arrows

2 Eladrin Mamluks (M)	Level 7 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid	XP 300 each
Initiative +11	**Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 77; **Bloodied** 38	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 19; **Reflex** 20; **Will** 18	
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects	
Speed 6; see also *dance of the desert blades* and *fey step*	
⊕ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage (crit 1d8 + 14), and the target is marked until the end of the eladrin mamluk's next turn.	
⸸ **Dance of the Desert Blades** (standard; recharges when first bloodied)	
Targets one or two creatures; the eladrin mamluk makes a scimitar attack and can then shift 1 square.	
Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**	
The eladrin mamluk can teleport 5 squares.	
Tower of Sand (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**	
The eladrin mamluk absorbs the sand underfoot to fuel a magical growth spurt; the eladrin mamluk becomes Large, occupying 4 squares instead of 1. Creatures and objects in the squares that the eladrin mamluk comes to occupy are pushed 1 square. The eladrin mamluk's reach becomes 2 and it gains a +5 bonus to damage rolls. The eladrin mamluk can revert to its normal form as a free action.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +9	
Str 18 (+7)	**Dex** 22 (+9)	**Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 13 (+4)	**Int** 14 (+5)	**Cha** 16 (+6)
Equipment chainmail, scimitar	

Development

Interrogating Prisoners: If the PCs question a captured eladrin or if they cast *speak with dead* upon one of their corpses, they find that they have their work cut out for them. Dead or alive, any eladrin remain defiantly silent until the PCs succeed on a 7th-level skill challenge with a complexity of 1, requiring four successes before three failures (primary skills are Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate).

If convinced to talk, the eladrin reluctantly provide directions to their encampment, which is located in "an oasis, some days ride away." Unfortunately, since their few layovers have been brief, they are familiar only with the region immediately surrounding their camp (Area O1) and can only guess at the number of eladrin present. They reveal that a beautiful female half-elf, who leads a small army of fey, employs their tribe and provides them with their specific targets, mainly ancient books and artifacts. However, the eladrin remain ignorant of Emrett's larger plans.

Tethered Camels: The eladrin's mounts, three dromedary camels, lounge in the shade of a small rock outcropping a hundred yards away from the ambush site. If the PCs rifle through their saddlebags, they find a single level 8 magic item among other mundane personal items.

Features of the Area

Windward Slope: Though steep, the windward slope of the dune does not hinder movement.

Leeward Slope: The leeward slope of the dune acts as difficult terrain. Unless a creature has earth walk, a DC 15 Athletics or Acrobatics check is required to avoid tumbling down its sandy expanse. Creatures that succeed on their skill check move normally, but those that fail by 5 or more fall 10 to 30 feet. The sand acts as a cushion and halves any falling damage. In addition to the above skill checks, creatures forced to move by an attack can also make a saving throw to avoid falling; if they succeed on their saving throw, they instead fall prone.

Sandstorm: Four rounds into the battle, the howling winds pick up, driving the sand inexorably forward and lightly obscuring anything 5 or more squares from a viewer. In addition, saving throws to end the blinded condition suffer a -2 penalty. The sandstorm persists until the end of the encounter.

Encounter 01: Eladrin Encampment

Encounter Level 8 (XP 1,900)

Setup

Thurraya (T)
3 eladrin mamluks (M)
4 eladrin desert blades (D)

Normally, the three eladrin mamluks recline on reed mats arranged around the fire pit, while the eladrin desert blades meditate in their tents. Their leader, Thurraya, relaxes in her private tent reading a treatise on magical theory. In any case, none of them are particularly attentive and they suffer a –2 penalty to their Perception checks (in addition to the penalty caused by the avian cacophony); thus, it should be relatively easy for the PCs to sneak past the encampment or achieve surprise. If the eladrin are aware of the PCs, they lurk in their tents and hide behind the palm trees, waiting to spring an ambush.

If the PCs surprise the eladrin, read:

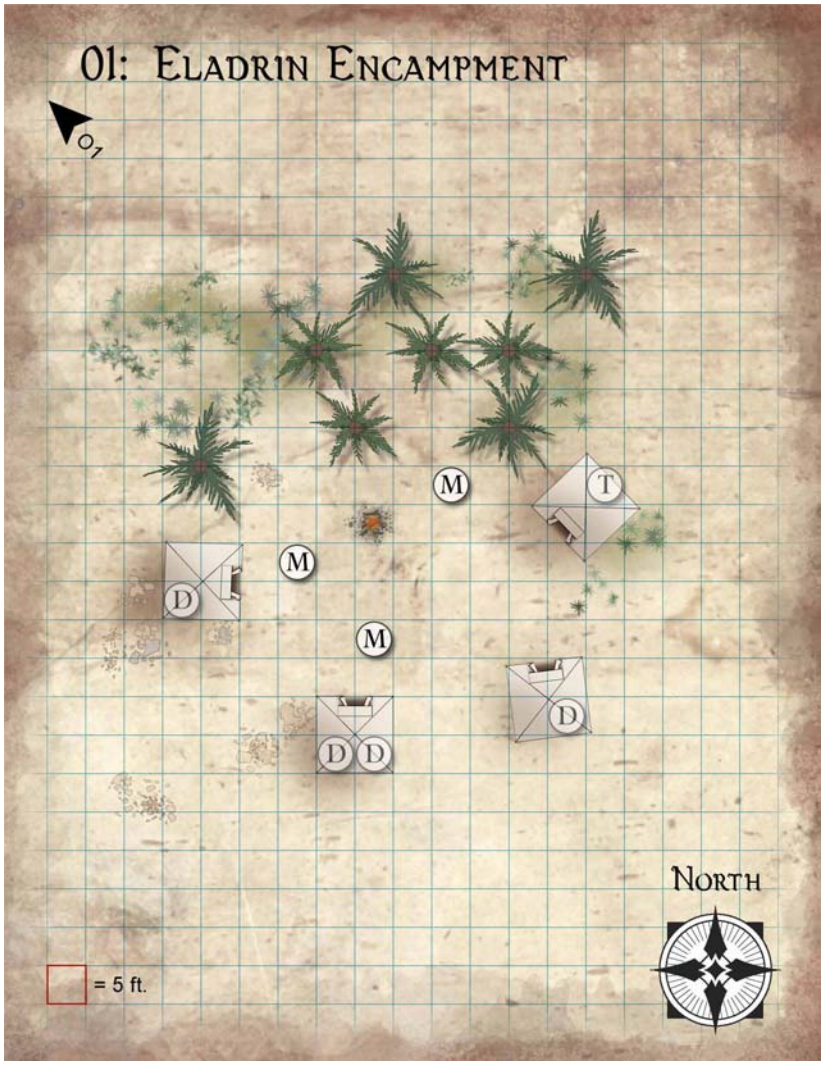
Three slim eladrin wearing flowing tan robes and indigo headwraps lounge around the smoldering fire pit. They appear startled by your sudden appearance, but they scramble to their feet, shouting for aid as they grab for their scimitars. In response, you hear a commotion from inside the tents.

If the eladrin are waiting to ambush the PCs:

Perception
DC 20: *You hear a faint rustling noise from inside one of the tents.*

If the eladrin surprise the PCs, read:

Three eladrin wearing flowing tan robes leap out from within the copse of palm trees, scimitars at the ready. Five similarly clad eladrin pour out of the tents; one, obviously female, hangs back. The air roils around her like a heat mirage.



Tactics

If the PCs surprise the eladrin, the three mamluks begin the encounter lying on the ground, prone. After they stand up, two engage the PCs while the third retreats toward Thurraya's tent. The mamluks hope to overwhelm the PCs and hamper their tactical movement, so they employ *tower of sand* as early as possible. The three mamluks are willing to give their life to protect Thurraya, retreating only if she orders it.

Thurraya and the desert blades emerge from their tents and enter the initiative count at the conclusion of the surprise round. The desert blades use *fey step* to surround a single, weak-looking foe to take advantage of their *heat stroke* power, and Thurraya enters the conflict with her favored tactic, a *ricocheting assault*. She uses her *scorching scimitar* power if she can catch at least two PCs in the burst, grudgingly sacrificing allies if hard pressed.

Thurraya (T) **Level 8 Elite Artillery**
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 700

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 134; **Bloodied** 67
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18; **Reflex** 21; **Will** 21; see also *mirage*
Resist 10 fire
Saving Throws +2; +7 against charm effects
Speed 6; see also *fey step*
Action Points 1

Scimitar (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage (crit 1d8 + 15).

Force Bolt (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**
Ranged 20; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 7 force damage.

Whirling Blade (standard; requires a scimitar; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10; +15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage (crit 2d8 + 15). *Aftereffect*: Thurraya's scimitar immediately returns to her hand.

Ricocheting Assault (standard; at-will)
Thurraya makes a *whirling blade* attack. *Effect:* If Thurraya hits with her first attack, she immediately makes a second *whirling blade* attack against the nearest enemy within range other than the first target.

Scorching Scimitar (standard; requires a scimitar; recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire, Weapon**
Area burst 1 within 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 7 fire damage. *Aftereffect*: Thurraya's scimitar immediately reforms in her hand.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Thurraya can teleport 5 squares.

Mirage (not usable while bloodied) ✦ **Illusion**
Thurraya has concealment against all melee and ranged attacks.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +12, Endurance +11
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, scimitar

If the eladrin are waiting to ambush the PCs and achieve surprise, during the surprise round, Thurraya attacks with her *scorching scimitar*, while two of the eladrin mamluks delay if necessary and then charge following her attack, with the third moving back to protect Thurraya. Otherwise, the ensuing fight unfolds as described above.

If the PCs kill two or more of the mamluks, the remaining eladrin flee to the nearby group of camels, abandoning Emrett and the oasis for the relative safety of the desert. If Thurraya lives, she first takes a minor action to disturb the corollaxes to facilitate their escape (see Features of the Area).

If the PCs flee, the surviving eladrin organize a posse and set out after them. However, they do not venture past the northern edge of the lake and decline to warn Emrett, Hazar, or their minions, since they prefer to hunt undisturbed.

4 Eladrin Desert Blades (D) **Level 7 Minion**
Medium fey humanoid XP 75 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 18
Resist 5 fire
Speed 6; see also *fey step*

Scimitar (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 6 damage (8 damage on a critical hit).

Heat Stroke ✦ **Fire**
A desert blade's basic attack deals 1 extra point of fire damage for each desert blade adjacent to the target.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The desert blade can teleport 5 squares.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 15 (+5)
Equipment leather armor, scimitar

3 Eladrin Mamluks (M) **Level 7 Soldier**
Medium fey humanoid XP 300 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 77; **Bloodied** 38
AC 23; **Fortitude** 19; **Reflex** 20; **Will** 18
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects
Speed 6; see also *dance of the desert blades* and *fey step*

Scimitar (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage (crit 1d8 + 14), and the target is marked until the end of the eladrin mamluk's next turn.

Dance of the Desert Blades (standard; recharges when first bloodied)
Targets one or two creatures; the eladrin mamluk makes a scimitar attack and can then shift 1 square.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The eladrin mamluk can teleport 5 squares.

Tower of Sand (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The eladrin mamluk absorbs the sand underfoot to fuel a magical growth spurt; the eladrin mamluk becomes Large, occupying 4 squares instead of 1. Creatures and objects in the squares that the eladrin mamluk comes to occupy are pushed 1 square. The eladrin mamluk's reach becomes 2 and it gains a +5 bonus to damage rolls. The eladrin mamluk can revert to its normal form as a free action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +9
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 22 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 14 (+5) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Equipment chainmail, scimitar

Development

Sentinels: If the corollaxes (see Features of the Area) employ their *color spray* ability, it automatically attracts the attention of a single Sentinel patrol. If necessary, allow the PCs to take a short rest before they attack, but not if Thurraya intentionally created the disturbance to cover an escape attempt.

Treasure: Searching through the tents yields an assortment of blankets, trail rations, camel saddles, and personal trinkets. However, PCs can uncover a leather pouch containing three amethysts (worth 100 gp each) with only a few minutes of searching. In addition, they can find (Perception DC 15) a scroll inscribed with the *fey passage* ritual (*Manual of the Planes,* page 150; worth 360 gp) tucked under a pillow in Thurraya's tent.

Features of the Area

Corollaxes: The nearby palm trees are host to a flock of corollaxes (magical, parrotlike birds native to the Feywild). If any palm trees are caught in the area of a blast or burst power, or if someone takes a minor action to disturb the corollaxes (such as by making loud noises, violently shaking a tree, or throwing rocks), they unleash a vibrant clash of colored light in a random direction. The defensive *color spray* is a close blast 5 attack, +8 vs. Will, and deals 1d6 + 4 radiant damage; creatures hit by the attack are also dazed until the end of their next turn.

PCs can identify the corollaxes and the threat they pose with a DC 14 Arcana check.

Eladrin Tents: A creature inside a tent has total concealment against those outside and vice versa. Creatures cannot end their movement in a square occupied by a tent unless they enter it, and they can do so only through an opening; dealing 5 damage to the tent tears a gap large enough for a Medium-sized creature to pass through. Cutting three of the four support ropes (all defenses 10, 5 hit points) collapses a tent, restraining and blinding anyone inside until the end of their next turn as they fumble to escape.

Fire Pit: Creatures beginning their turn within the space of the smoldering fire pit take 5 fire damage.

Palm Tree: The palm trees stand 40 to 60 feet high; anyone sharing a square with a tree gains cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 12 Athletics check; however, this agitates its skittish inhabitants, immediately prompting them to unleash a *color spray* at the offending creature. Creatures without a climb speed hit by their *color spray* must make another DC 12 Athletics check to avoid falling and taking the appropriate amount of damage.

Encounter 02: The Love Nest

Encounter Level 7 (XP 1,700)

Setup

Saqr, eladrin warrior (S)
Taalah, dryad handmaiden (T)
quickling runner (Q)

The encounter begins when the PCs cross the silk barrier. The lovers are too engrossed with one another to take notice of their surroundings and suffer an additional –2 penalty to their Perception checks, but if the PCs slash their way through the barrier, both automatically notice the intrusion. In either case, Saqr and Taalah begin the encounter together at the center of the clearing. (Taalah keeps herself continually cloaked in a *deceptive veil*, appearing as an exotic-looking female elf). If they detect the PCs' approach, Saqr prepares by using *tower of sand* while his lover takes cover behind him.

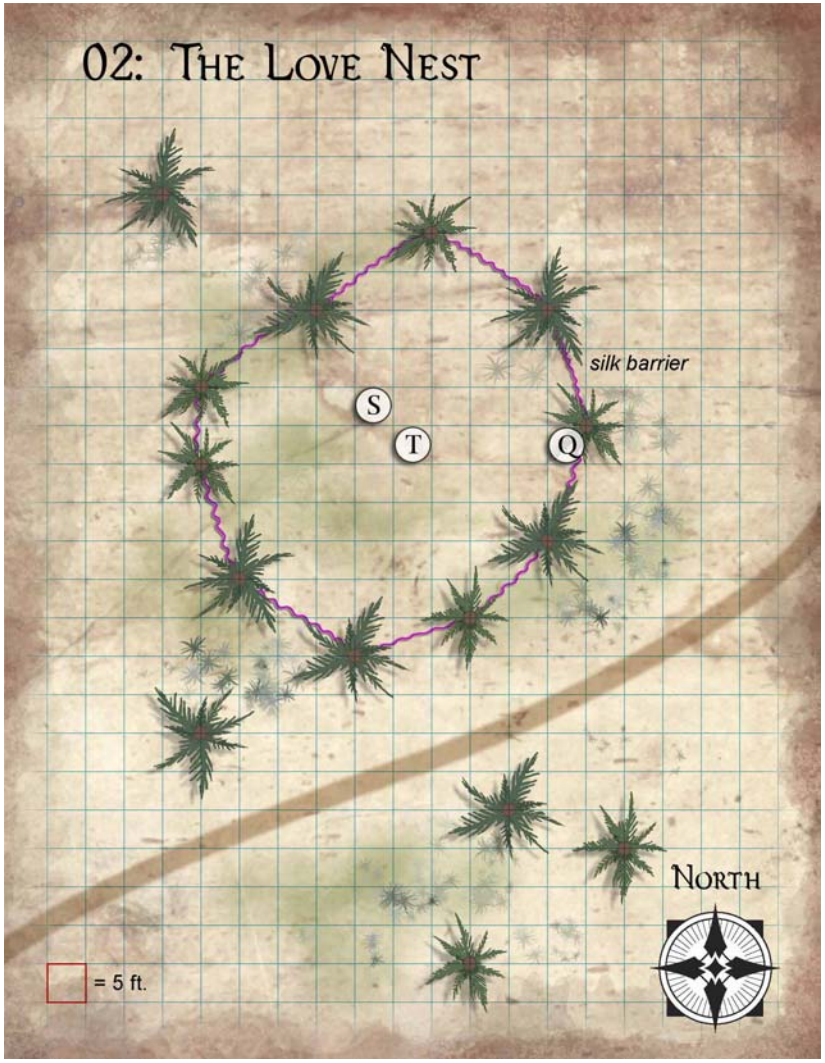
The quickling is one of a pair of runners employed by Emrett; lately, the creature has grown smitten with Taalah and has taken to sneaking under the silk barrier to watch the couple. For hours on end, he hides among the bushes, and though his presence delights Taalah, Saqr remains ignorant. It is unlikely that the PCs spot the quickling prior to the start of the battle, and it waits until the PCs seriously threaten Taalah before leaping to her defense.

When the PCs see Saqr and Taalah, read:

A muscular, proud-looking eladrin with long chestnut brown hair stands naked before you; scars and other mementos of battle crisscross his bronzed skin. He nimbly hefts a serrated falchion into his long-fingered hands, shouting in Common, "I shall pluck out your eyes for daring to even look upon my love," obviously referring to the willowy female crouching behind him.

The elf woman's skin is the color of finely polished teak and her green hair seems woven from the delicate fronds of the surrounding palm trees. Though nude and in danger, she still smiles at you with a seductive gleam in her wide, almond-shaped eyes.

If the PCs' Insight checks beat Taalah's Bluff check, they pierce her disguise and see her true form. (Saqr is not aware of what his love truly looks like, nor would he care, but he takes great offense to any suggestion that she is more than she appears.)



Saqr (S) **Level 9 Elite Brute**
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 800

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 236; **Bloodied** 118
AC 21; **Fortitude** 23; **Reflex** 21; **Will** 19; see also *bereaved frenzy*
Immune fear
Saving Throws +2; +7 against charm effects
Speed 6; see also *fey step*
Action Points 1

⊕ **Falchion** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 9 damage (crit 4d4 + 17 damage).

↯ **A Lover's Retribution** (immediate reaction, triggers when Taalah is targeted by an attack; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Saqr charges the enemy that targeted Taalah and makes a falchion attack. On a hit, the target takes an additional 1d10 damage and is marked by Saqr until the end of his next turn.

Bereaved Frenzy (usable when Taalah drops to 0 or fewer hit points)
Saqr gains a +2 bonus to his attack rolls and deals an extra 5 damage on a hit. However, he also takes a -2 penalty to all his defenses and gains vulnerable 5 to all attacks.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Saqr can teleport 5 squares.

Tower of Sand (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
Saqr absorbs the sand underfoot to fuel a magical growth spurt; Saqr becomes Large, occupying 4 squares instead of 1. Creatures and objects in the squares that Saqr comes to occupy are pushed 1 square. Saqr's reach becomes 2 and he gains a +5 bonus to damage rolls. Saqr can revert to his normal form as a free action.

Threatening Reach (usable when Large-sized)
Saqr can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within his reach (2 squares).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Athletics +14, Endurance +13, Intimidate +11
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 18 (+8) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment falchion

Taalah (T) **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium fey humanoid (plant), dryad XP 400

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +12
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21
Speed 8 (forest walk)

⊕ **Claws** (standard, at-will)
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, or 1d8 + 9 damage if the target is the only enemy adjacent to the dryad.

Deceptive Veil (minor, at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The dryad can disguise itself to appear as any Medium humanoid, usually a beautiful elf or eladrin. An Insight check (opposed by the dryad's Bluff check) pierces the disguise.

Treestride (move, at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
The dryad can teleport 8 squares if it begins and ends adjacent to a tree, treant, or a plant of Large size or bigger.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Elven
Skills Bluff +10, Insight +12, Stealth +12
Str 19 (+8) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 13 (+5)

Quickling Runner (Q) **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Small fey humanoid XP 400

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48
AC 24 (28 against opportunity attacks); **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20
Speed 12, climb 6

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 damage.

↯ **Quick Cuts** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The quickling moves its speed. At any two points during its move, the quickling makes a melee basic attack at a -2 penalty. The quickling cannot use this power while immobilized or slowed.

Fey Shift (standard, encounter)
The quickling runner shifts 10 squares.

Maintain Mobility (minor, recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅)
An immobilized quickling runner is no longer immobilized.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Elven
Skills Acrobatics +21, Bluff +9, Stealth +16
Str 9 (+3) **Dex** 24 (+11) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment short sword

Tactics

Once the battle begins, Saqr keeps himself between the PCs and Taalah, who in turn flees toward the relative safety of the nearest grove of trees. If he has not done so already, Saqr uses *tower of sand* at his earliest opportunity, using his threatening reach to better control the flow of battle. His only aim is to keep the PCs away from Taalah; if they attack her, they quickly suffer the consequences of *a lover's retribution*.

Taalah tries to stay out of combat and uses *treestride* to keep her distance from the PCs. If Saqr is handling them easily, she teleports behind one of them to flank with her paramour, gleefully attacking with her claws. Otherwise, she continues to hide, attacking only in self-defense.

The quickling remains motionless unless Taalah is threatened. It then rushes to her side, continually circling her while using *quick cuts* as often as it can. The quickling would love nothing more than to see Saqr fall under a PC's blade, enabling him to take Taalah for himself, and does nothing to assist his nominal ally. (Saqr, offended by the quickling's obvious intrusion, reciprocates this attitude.)

Both Saqr and the quickling fight to the bitter end to protect Taalah (or avenge her death), but she is not so sentimental. If the PCs kill Saqr, she tries to flee by means of *treestride*.

Development

The Likely Survivor: If the PCs manage to capture Taalah, the anxious dryad feigns innocence and attempts to gain her freedom by charming the least charismatic PC (male or female) in the party. If that seductive gambit fails, she tries to ingratiate herself by readily divulging all that she knows, including the general layout of the oasis (even the hidden obelisk) and the disposition of Emrett's fey henchmen. In addition, though she is not privy to Emrett's plans, she informs them that her mistress keeps a personal diary in her tent in which she records all her secrets (though she neglects to mention the magic trap warding the book). Finally, Taalah offers to accompany them on their journey, staying uncomfortably close to her favored PC; however, the duplicitous fey eventually betrays them with a laugh and a smile.

Features of the Area

Palm Tree: The palm trees stand between 40 to 60 feet high; anyone sharing a square with a tree gains cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 12 Athletics check.

Silk Barrier: Creatures standing on one side of the barrier have total concealment against those on the other side. Dealing 2 damage to the saffron cloth opens a gap big enough for a Medium-sized creature to pass through, but it would be easier to lift the unanchored silk, which flaps freely in the breeze. Small (or smaller) creatures that crawl can easily pass underneath the barrier without disturbing it further.

Treasure: Taalah has hidden Saqr's gifts within a tree hollow that the PCs can find with a DC 20 Perception check (if captured, Taalah uses this treasure as a bargaining chip). They include a platinum hairpin (worth 100 gp), a collection of silver bangles (worth 75 gp), an ivory brooch shaped like an elephant (worth 75 gp), and a diamond necklace (worth 450 gp). Finally, the saffron silk barrier is worth a total of 1,000 gp if cleaned, but is extremely bulky and collectively weighs over 200 lb.

Encounter 03: Emrett's Abode

Encounter Level 6 (XP 1,450)

Setup

Quickling runner (Q)
Satyr piper (S)
2 spriggan giantsouls (G)

The spriggan giantsouls guarding the campsite normally stand near the entrance to Emrett's tent while the satyr piper and quickling runner noisily entertain themselves. After several weeks without serious incident, none of the fey expects intruders and they are genuinely shocked to see the PCs. The spriggans, who are fanatically loyal to Emrett, attack on sight; the other two take their cues from them.

When the PCs spot the fey, read:

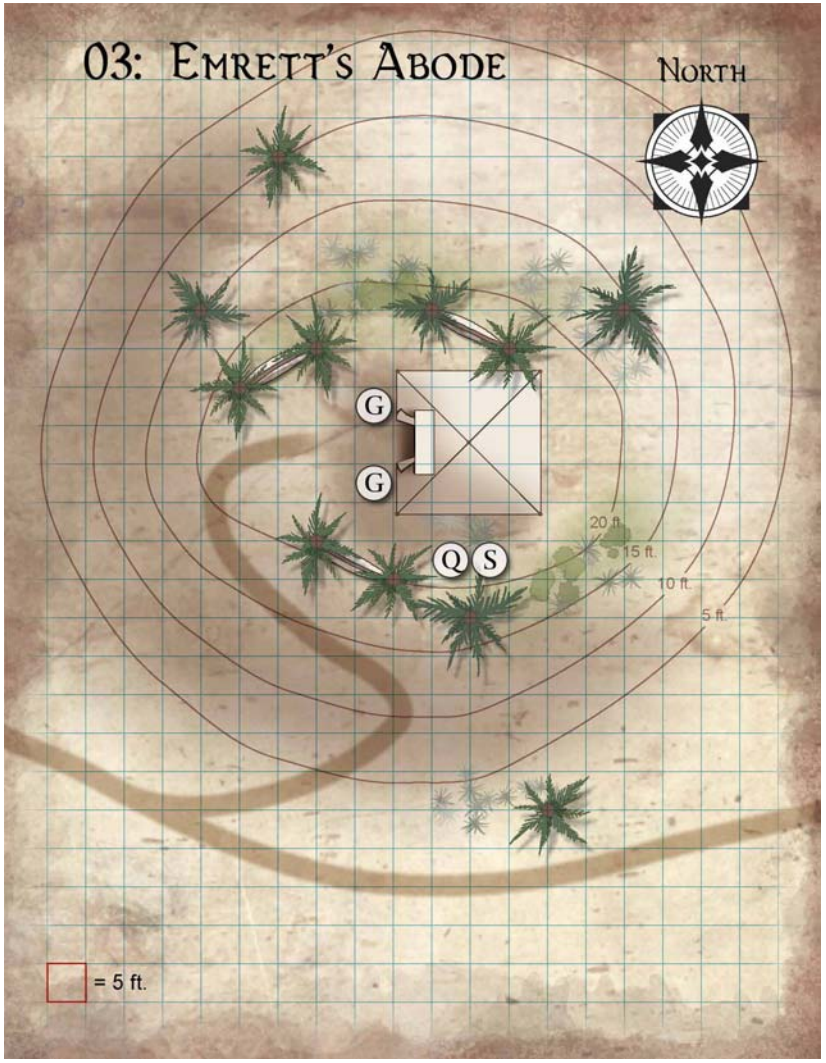
A pair of ugly, gnomelike fey stand guard in front of the large tent; they appear unarmed but wear soiled hide armor, iron-shod boots, and grubby pointed caps stained red with blood. Off to the side, a satyr and a quickling laugh rather loudly as they shoot dice and take puffs from a battered hookah.

Tactics

The giantsouls gleefully attempt to beat the PCs to death, employing *giantsoul slam* whenever it recharges, while the satyr piper contributes by prancing around while playing his *wooden pipes*. He prefers to play a *feral overture* to bolster his allies, but he shifts to a *leaping stag dance* or *song of freedom* if it becomes necessary, reserving his *dazing melody* for if the PCs move too close or if he needs to beat a hasty getaway.

Although the satyr piper defends himself with a well-placed gore or even his longbow, he entrusts his safety to his gambling buddy, the quickling runner. He weaves in and out of battle, joyfully employing *quick cuts*, but he keeps one eye trained on his friend (and the gambling pot) just in case. It particularly likes to goad a PC into giving chase, so it can clothesline them by leading them through a space containing a hammock.

The zealous giantsouls fight to the death to protect their campsite, but the satyr piper and quickling runner retreat if the PCs manage to kill both spriggans. They care little for Emrett's plans (not that they know any details) and retreat to a less hazardous region of the oasis to resume their frivolity.



2 Spriggan Giantsouls (G)	Level 8 Brute
Small fey humanoid	XP 350 each
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 106; **Bloodied** 53	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Slam** (standard, at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 9 damage while the spriggan giantsoul is bloodied.	
⸸ **Giantsoul Slam** (standard, recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)	
Reach 2; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone. While the spriggan giantsoul is bloodied, the damage increases to 2d6 + 9.	
⸸ **Surprise Slam** (immediate interrupt, when an enemy within 2 squares of the spriggan giantsoul attacks an ally, encounter)	
Giantsoul slam recharges, and the giantsoul uses it against the triggering enemy.	
Redcap Zeal (when the spriggan giantsoul bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer, encounter)	
The giantsoul gains 1d10 + 3 temporary hit points.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Elven
Skills Athletics +14, Intimidate +10, Stealth +12	
Str 18 (+8)	**Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+5)
Equipment iron-shod boots, hide armor	

Quickling Runner (Q)	Level 9 Skirmisher
Small fey humanoid	XP 400
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	
AC 24 (28 against opportunity attacks); **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20	
Speed 12, climb 6	
⊕ **Short Sword** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Quick Cuts** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
The quickling moves its speed. At any two points during its move, the quickling makes a melee basic attack at a -2 penalty. The quickling cannot use this power while immobilized or slowed.	
Fey Shift (standard, encounter)	
The quickling runner shifts 10 squares.	
Maintain Mobility (minor, recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)	
An immobilized quickling runner is no longer immobilized.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Elven
Skills Acrobatics +21, Bluff +9, Stealth +16	
Str 9 (+3)	**Dex** 24 (+11) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment short sword	

Satyr Piper (S)	Level 8 Controller (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid	XP 350
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Gore** (standard, at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
⊕ **Longbow** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 20/40; +12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.	
✧ **Wooden Pipes** (standard; sustain standard, at-will)	
Close burst 5; deafened creatures are immune; the satyr piper plays one of the following tunes on its pipes and can repeat the effect on its turn as a standard action.	
Dazing Melody (Charm): Targets enemies; +11 vs. Will; deafened creatures are immune; the target is dazed until the end of the satyr piper's next turn. The piper must make a new attack roll when it sustains this effect.	
Feral Overture: Allies in the burst gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the satyr piper's next turn.	
Leaping Stag Dance: Allies in the burst can shift 2 squares immediately.	
Song of Freedom: Allies in the burst can make a free saving throw against an effect that a save can end.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Elven
Skills Bluff +14, Nature +10, Stealth +13	
Str 10 (+4)	**Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 14 (+6)	**Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Equipment wooden pipes, arrows (30), longbow.	

Features of the Area

Hammocks: Spotting the camouflaged vine hammocks requires a DC 12 Perception check (DC 17 if the PC is moving). Medium-sized and larger creatures moving through a square containing a hammock must spend 2 squares of movement or become prone (smaller creatures can pass underneath the suspended hammocks without incident). Creatures can move through a square containing a hammock at their normal speed by making a DC 14 Athletics check to leap over it; failure causes the PC to fall prone and become immobilized until the beginning of its next turn. Cutting one of the support vines (5 hit points; all defenses 10) causes the hammock to fall to the ground, allowing unhampered movement through its squares.

Palm Trees: The palm trees stand between 40 to 60 feet high; anyone sharing a square with a tree gains cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 12 Athletics check.

Tent: A creature inside Emrett's tent has total concealment against those outside and vice versa. Creatures cannot end their movement in a square occupied by the tent unless they enter it, and they can do so only through an opening; dealing 5 damage to the tent tears a gap large enough for a Medium-sized creature to pass through. Cutting three of the four support ropes (all defenses 10, 5 hit points) collapses a tent, restraining and blinding anyone inside it until the end of their next turn as they fumble to escape.

Treasure: The satyr and quickling's gambling pot lies scattered on a bare patch of ground adjacent to the Emrett's tent. It consists of a 34 sp and a couple of worthless IOUs scrawled in Elven on a piece of tattered sheet music.

Development

Every night, several hours after sundown, Emrett and her comet tail eagle companion return to camp, remaining there until dawn. If she is present during the encounter, the resulting combat is a Level 10 challenge.

Skill Challenge O4: Smoothing Ruffled Feathers

Encounter Level 7 (XP 1,500)

Setup

Run this skill challenge if the PCs opt to negotiate with the untrustworthy sphinx. If the conversation degenerates into combat, proceed with Tactical Encounter O4 (page 58). This skill challenge assumes that it takes place within Hazar's lair; adjust the challenge accordingly if it occurs elsewhere.

Smoothing Ruffled Feathers **Level 7**
Skill Challenge XP 900

The ibis-headed sphinx rises from her nest and eyes you warily before addressing you in a haughty, feminine voice. "I am Hazar, the sacred, eternal guardian of this oasis. How dare you mortals invade my aerie! Explain yourselves immediately or suffer my just punishment!" She paws menacingly at the ground with her razor-sharp, leonine claws and clearly appears irritated by your presence.

Because the PCs must succeed on two separate tasks, this skill challenge is divided into a pair of mini-challenges.

First, they must appease Hazar and soothe her ego for their intrusion. Once mollified, she proposes an alliance with the PCs, but only if they can ease her boredom with "a spirited intellectual debate." Unfortunately, Hazar is toying with them; she mainly hopes to gain the benefits of her *sphinx's challenge* when she inevitably strikes.

The PCs need to gain four successes during the first part of the challenge before proceeding on to the second. If the PCs suffer 3 failures at any point during the skill challenge, it ends in failure. The consequences for failure depend on when it happens.

Complexity
3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills (Part 1)
Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate

Secondary Skills (Part 1)
Insight

Primary Skills (Part 2)
Arcana, History, Nature, Religion

Secondary Skills (Part 2)
Arcana, Diplomacy, Insight

Success
Their performance surprises Hazar; deprived of the benefits of her *sphinx's challenge*, she chooses to honor her alliance. See below for details of the assistance that she provides the PCs.

Failure (Part 1)
Hazar concludes that the PCs are bumbling fools and confidently attacks. She refuses to ally with them under any circumstances, but she does nothing to stop them if they somehow escape and then later interfere with Emrett's plans.

Failure (Part 2)
The PCs give Hazar pause, so she is happy to have the benefits of her *sphinx's challenge* when she pounces. Until the end of the encounter, Hazar gains the following benefits: +1 action point, an extra use of *second wind*, a +2 bonus to attack rolls, and a +2 bonus to all defenses. Fortunately, Hazar does not want to kill them at this time. Instead, she looks at them disdainfully and coolly demands that they leave her abode. If they do not immediately comply, she attacks, but she intends only to drive them off. The PCs have piqued her interest, and she views them as potential tools that she can use to weaken Emrett. Secretly, she instructs the sentinel patrols not to accost them any longer; if they discover the PCs, they circle overhead and take no hostile action unless attacked or Hazar commands otherwise.

Part 1 - Flattering a Diva

The sphinx glares at you impatiently. "Come now, out with it! Time is precious even for an immortal!"

In Part 1 of the skill challenge, the PCs must pacify the irritable sphinx. She expects the PCs to be properly deferential and remains aloof while the challenge unfolds, leaving most of the talking to them.

Special
If the PCs possess Emrett's diary and reveal its contents to Hazar, they automatically gain one success in this part of the skill challenge. Hazar becomes enraged at her erstwhile partner's treachery and spends the next several minutes colorfully cursing her existence.
For every 500 gp worth of treasure or magic items that the PCs give Hazar, they gain a cumulative +2 bonus to any skill checks made during this part of the skill challenge. Hazar merrily coos at everything given to her, paying extra attention to anything particularly shiny.

Primary Skills
Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate

Bluff (DC 24): Having grown weary of Emrett's constant lies, Hazar is automatically suspicious. She can be bluffed, but she squawks and glares threateningly at any PC who fails a Bluff check against her.

Diplomacy (DC 14): Hazar is utterly self-absorbed and adores praise; furthermore, she is immensely catty and enjoys mocking her rivals. If a PC succeeds at a Diplomacy check, they deliver either an exceptionally flattering compliment or a snide remark at Emrett's expense, both to Hazar's delight. Conversely, if a PC fails this check, she rolls her eyes in obvious disgust.

Intimidate (DC 19; maximum one success): Hazar is looking for dupes to help her murder Emrett, so any suitable display of power makes her sit up and take notice. If a PC succeeds at this Intimidate check, the bemused sphinx chuckles and pays the PC a compliment, though her tone is that of a mother indulging a child. If a PC tries to use Intimidate again or if this check fails, Hazar yawns loudly and does her best to ignore the offending PC for the remainder of the skill challenge.

Secondary Skill
Insight

Insight (DC 14): Astute PCs can exploit Hazar's vanity and learn her amenability to "gifts." Using this skill does not count as a success or failure for the challenge, but a success provides a +2 bonus to the PCs next skill check. A failure results in Hazar spending several minutes castigating them for wasting her time.

Part 2 - A Sphinx's Salon

Looking rather pleased with herself, Hazar settles into her nest. "Now that we are all friends, won't you indulge me for a little while? Out here, thought-provoking dialog is so hard to come by." Before continuing, Hazar motions with her paw to the rocky ground at her feet. "Come now," she commands, "sit and let us discuss the latest schools of magical thought."

Driven by boredom, Hazar becomes a vigorous participant in the second part of this challenge. She is an unbearable know-it-all, and loves nothing more than demonstrating her superior intellect and breadth of knowledge to a captive audience. As a result, during the ensuing debate, Hazar questions their ideas, dismisses their arguments, and ridicules any missteps, making for a most unpleasant experience.

Special

Hazar is a dogged adversary who continually looks to undermine her opponents' positions. When a hero makes an Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion check, they need to roll a 19 or higher to score a success. A roll of 14–18 means that the character presented an argument at least good enough to hold Hazar's interest but not persuasive enough to impress her; it keeps the skill challenge going but does not count as either a success or a failure. Only a result of 13 or lower counts as a failure.

Primary Skills

Arcana, History, Nature, Religion

Any primary skill (DC 14/19): These skills represent Hazar's favorite subjects, and she tries to steer the debate toward them. If a character gains a success (DC 19), Hazar acknowledges their skillful debate with a nod of her head. If they roll 14–18, Hazar rudely cuts them off so she can offer her counterpoint. If they fail, Hazar spends several minutes smugly lecturing them, talking over any interruption.

Secondary Skills

Arcana, Diplomacy, Insight

Diplomacy (DC 14): The PC makes an excellent rhetorical point and gains a +2 bonus to any character's next Arcana, History, or Nature check. Using this skill does not count as a success or failure for the challenge, though a failure does elicit a sarcastic retort from Hazar.

Insight (DC 14): An observant PC notices that Hazar is guiding the conversation in a peculiar fashion. Using this skill does not count as a success or failure for the challenge; instead, it unlocks the Arcana check below.

Arcana (DC 20): Characters cannot achieve this success without first succeeding at the above Insight check. If a PC makes the check, they realize that Hazar has entrapped them in her *sphinx's challenge*. They immediately grasp the severity of their situation and the consequences of failure or ending the challenge prematurely. Adding insult to injury, Hazar winks knowingly at the perceptive PC. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge.

If the PCs succeed on the skill challenge, the sphinx decides that it is finally time to eliminate Emrett. Feigning contriteness and taking great pains to minimize her own involvement in recent events, Hazar proposes an alliance. In return for her assistance in their battle against Emrett, Hazar demands that the PCs leave the oasis and never return; her terms are nonnegotiable and if they refuse, she attacks.

Upon their acceptance, Hazar provides the following aid:

- If the PCs have not discovered the obelisk, Hazar reveals its existence and hidden location (Area O6), as well as its history.
- If the PCs have not rescued Voor, she discloses the location of his prison (Area O5) and the command words required to control his magic cage. PCs can thus bypass the skill challenge normally needed to save him.
- Hazar has been studying Emrett's fang golem looking for any glaring weaknesses. She informs the PCs that it is particularly vulnerable to thunder damage and cautions them to avoid its attacks, since they strengthen Emrett's magic. After their discussion with Hazar, the PCs gain a +5 bonus to any Arcana checks made to learn more about the golem.
- Hazar orders the sentinels not to accost the PCs as long as Emrett and her minions still live. However, the sentinels still attack the PCs in self-defense or if they invade their aerie.
- Emrett kept Hazar in the dark regarding the implications of her archaeological work, but she has since realized the obelisk's potential. However, Hazar conceals this from the PCs, truthfully claiming that the intellectual challenge was her sole reason for agreeing to participate in Emrett's schemes.
- Hazar promises to keep the PCs secretly apprised of any new information that arises through *animal messenger* rituals. Though she has no further information to share, Hazar sends a seemingly endless supply of annoying sparrows their way to prod them forward or urge them to act more quickly.
- Finally, Hazar promises to participate in the final battle against Emrett, but she is lying. In truth, she plans on hanging back and reserving her powers for when she double-crosses the spent PCs. They can detect her subterfuge by succeeding on an Insight check opposed by her Bluff check (+4 modifier). Hazar maintains her innocence no matter what the results of the check might be, and quickly resorts to threats if the PCs turn insolent.

Encounter O4: Hazar's Lair

Encounter Level 10 (XP 2,500)

Setup

Hazar (H)
4 summoned songbird swarms

If Hazar is unaware of the PCs ascent, she begins the encounter in her nest. Otherwise, she takes wing to attack them as they climb the cliff face. Do not place the songbird swarms until Hazar summons them. If the PCs decide to talk with Hazar instead of fighting her, proceed instead with Skill Challenge O4: Smoothing Ruffled Feathers.

When the PCs first see Hazar, read:

This horse-sized creature combines the tawny body of a lioness and the balding gray head, elongated neck, and curved bill of a sacred ibis. Powerful wings covered in snowy white feathers sprout from her wide shoulders.

Hazar (H) **Level 10 Solo Controller**
Large fey magical beast, sphinx XP 2,500
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +14; low-light vision
HP 424; **Bloodied** 212; see also *second wind*
AC 24; **Fortitude** 21; **Reflex** 23; **Will** 22
Saving Throws +5
Speed 6, fly 8, overland flight 10
Action Points 2

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.

⸸ **Pounce** (standard; at-will)
Hazar can make two claw attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, it is knocked prone. *Special:* When charging, Hazar can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.

⸸ **Buffeting Wings** (immediate interrupt, triggers when two or more enemies flank Hazar; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; targets enemies flanking Hazar; 1d6 + 4 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares.

✲ **Desert Storm Burst** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning, Thunder**
Area burst 1 within 12; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 lightning and thunder damage, and Hazar can slide each target 1 square.

✲ **Flensing Haboob** (standard; encounter)
Hazar creates a violent, magical sandstorm. Area burst 2 within 12; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 damage and the target is knocked prone and blinded (save ends). Creatures within the haboob gain concealment, but it also limits their line of sight to adjacent squares. *Miss:* Half damage. *Sustain:* Hazar sustains the haboob and can move it up to six squares by spending a move action; any creature that enters the haboob's space or starts its turn within it is subject to another attack.

Second Wind (standard; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
Hazar spends a healing surge and regains 106 hit points. She also gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of her next turn.

Summon Songbird Swarm (standard; recharges when the first two songbird swarms are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points)
Hazar summons a pair of songbird swarms. The summoned swarms appear within 3 squares of Hazar and act immediately after her in the initiative order. They remain until they are killed, dismissed by Hazar (as a free action), or the encounter ends. Hazar can end her movement in a square occupied by a songbird swarm; she gains concealment when occupying a square containing a bird swarm.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Draconic, Supernal; Hazar can also communicate with any bird or birdlike creature.
Skills Arcana +15, Diplomacy +14, Nature +15
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+9)
Con 18 (+9) **Int** 21 (+10) **Cha** 19 (+9)
Rituals Hazar knows the following rituals: *Animal Messenger* (birds only), *Brew Potion*, *Disenchant Magic Item*, and *Enchant Magic Item*.

Tactics

If the PCs surprise Hazar in her nest, her first instinct is to take flight. Since the rear of the ledge is too cramped for flying, she uses *desert storm burst* to slide the PCs out of her path (and perhaps over the precipice) before taking off. Once airborne, she spends her first action point to summon a pair of songbird swarms and instructs them to attack the PCs while she wheels about. If enough PCs still congregate on the ledge, she conjures a *flensing haboob* and sustains it for as long as possible, using a move action to move it only if she has landed (she might sacrifice an action point to do so if necessary). She is otherwise content to continue hurling *desert storm bursts* at them, preferring to target vulnerable PCs still climbing the cliff.

If Hazar is aware of the PCs' ascent (most likely due to a fight with a Sentinel patrol), she summons the songbird swarms before taking off and attacks largely as described above. If the PCs confront the sphinx in the air, consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 47 for information on running aerial combat. If faced with a flying foe, Hazar tries to use her *flensing haboob* to knock them prone so that they crash.

Hazar has an aversion to melee, but if she must, she surrounds herself with her songbird swarms and charges, using *pounce* against her targets, while shielding herself with her *buffeting wings*.

If bloodied, Hazar immediately flees to nurse her wounds. If the PCs follow her, she tries to duck out of sight and use *second wind* before resuming the battle, but if unable, she turns and fights to the death. Her songbird swarms willingly sacrifice themselves at her command.

4 Songbird Swarms		Level 6 Skirmisher
Medium natural beast (swarm)		XP 250 each
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision	
Swarm Attack aura 1; any enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 damage.		
HP 68; **Bloodied** 34		
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 18		
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 5 against close and area attacks		
Speed 2; fly 8 (hover)		
⨁ **Blinding Swarm** (standard; at-will)		
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends)		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –	
Str 12 (+4)	**Dex** 19 (+7)	**Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 12 (+4)	**Int** 2 (-1)	**Cha** 6 (+1)

Development

A fight with Hazar automatically draws the interest of a sentinel patrol, in addition to any patrols already attacking the PCs for trespassing in their rookery.

Features of the Area

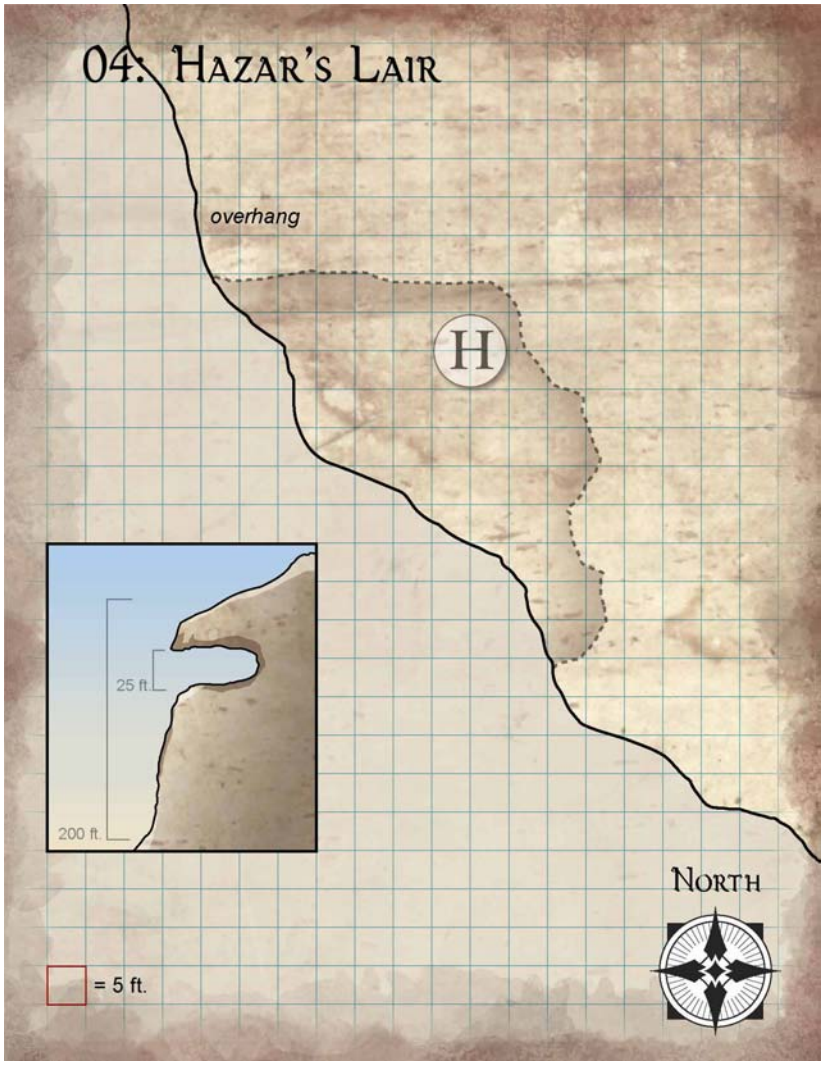
Ceiling: At its highest point, the rock outcropping above the ledge is only 5 squares above the floor.

Illumination: The ample shade normally shrouds the entire ledge in dim light, even at high noon.

Nest: Hazar built her nest to accommodate a creature of her size. Medium and smaller creatures must succeed on a DC 5 Athletics check to enter it. Such creatures enjoy cover relative to those outside the nest, but it acts as difficult terrain.

Rock Ledge: Hazar's nest perches 200 feet above the oasis. A fall from this height would be lethal (dealing 20d10 damage). Fortunately, a PC who falls from the nest lands on a ledge 30 feet below.

Treasure: Among the fish bones and molted feathers, the PCs can find fifty glittering garnets (each worth 10 gp) woven directly into her nest and a level 11 magic item. The ancient papyrus scrolls taken from Emrett's library rest atop a crude lectern in Hazar's nest. They illustrate principles of fey magic and are worth 500 gp to the right collector. Finally, discarded next to the lectern is an ivory scroll tube (worth 200 gp).



Encounter 05: Voor's Prison

Encounter Level 7 (1,550 XP)

Setup

Advanced iron cobra (I)
Voor (V)
Spriggan powrie (P)
Spriggan witherer (W)
2 spriggan thorns (T)

A gang of Emrett's minions watches over Voor. The thorns pace attentively in front of his cage, while the powrie and witherer crouch in a nearby stand of acacia trees. In addition, a powerful iron cobra has wrapped its articulated metal coils around Voor's cage.

When the PCs approach, read:

The cage is guarded by two gnomelike fey wearing rusty chainmail, ironshod boots, and pointed red caps. They wield odd swords studded with prickly green thorns and lug around blood-spattered shields. A metallic cobra is wrapped around the perimeter of the cage.

The powrie and witherer remain hidden by the lofty elephant grass; do not place them on the map until they join the battle.

Tactics

When the battle starts, as a free action, one of the spriggan thorns shouts out the command word that seals Voor's cage, and then both use their *mark of thorns* against the PCs, targeting leaders first and melee characters second. They attack with their short swords and try to keep themselves between the PCs and Voor's cage. The thorns use *drowsing puncture* when the spriggan powrie enters the fight and after first becoming bloodied.

The spriggan powrie attacks as soon as it hears its ally cry out. It prefers to weave in and out of the elephant grass to gain combat advantage. It *hamstrings* any PC who appears especially mobile, and delights in using *punt the fallen* against a prone enemy, kicking them away from Voor's cage if possible.

The spriggan witherer skirts the battle and positions itself to put the iron cobra and thorns between it and the PCs. It favors *sun scorch*, and until it becomes bloodied it casts it as often as possible, after which it switches to *blood for the earth*. If the PCs move too close to it or Voor's cage, it uses *flattening wind* to push them away.

The iron cobra does not stray far from the cage, using *poison the mind* as often as possible and concentrating its attacks against those trying to free Voor. It indiscriminately targets any creature near the cage,

Advanced Iron Cobra (I) **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 350

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +10; darkvision
HP 99; **Bloodied** 49
AC 23; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20
Immune disease, poison
Speed 7

⊕ **Bite** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Poison the Mind (standard, recharge ⚁ ⚂ ⚃ ⚀) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; only affects creatures taking ongoing poison damage; +11 vs. Will; the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both).

Guard Area
An iron cobra can use its *poison the mind* power against any creature in its guarded area, even if the power hasn't recharged and even if the target isn't taking ongoing poison damage.

Slithering Shift (move, at-will)
The iron cobra shifts 3 squares as a move action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +11
Str 17 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 19 (+8) **Int** 5 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+5)

Spriggan Powrie (P) **Level 7 Skirmisher**
Small fey humanoid XP 300

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 79; **Bloodied** 39
AC 21 (23 against opportunity attacks); **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18
Speed 6

⊕ **Sickle** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Hamstring (standard, recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone, is slowed until the end of the spriggan powrie's next turn, and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Punt the Fallen (minor 1/round, at-will)
Targets a prone creature; +12 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 3 damage, and the spriggan powrie pushes the target 3 squares.

Blood Slide
A spriggan powrie does not provoke opportunity attacks for moving out of a space adjacent to a bloodied creature or a creature that is taking ongoing damage.

Combat Advantage
When a spriggan powrie hits a creature that is taking ongoing damage and is granting combat advantage to the powrie, the powrie's attack increases the ongoing damage by 5.

Redcap Zeal (when the spriggan powrie bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer, encounter)
The powrie gains 1d8 + 2 temporary hit points.

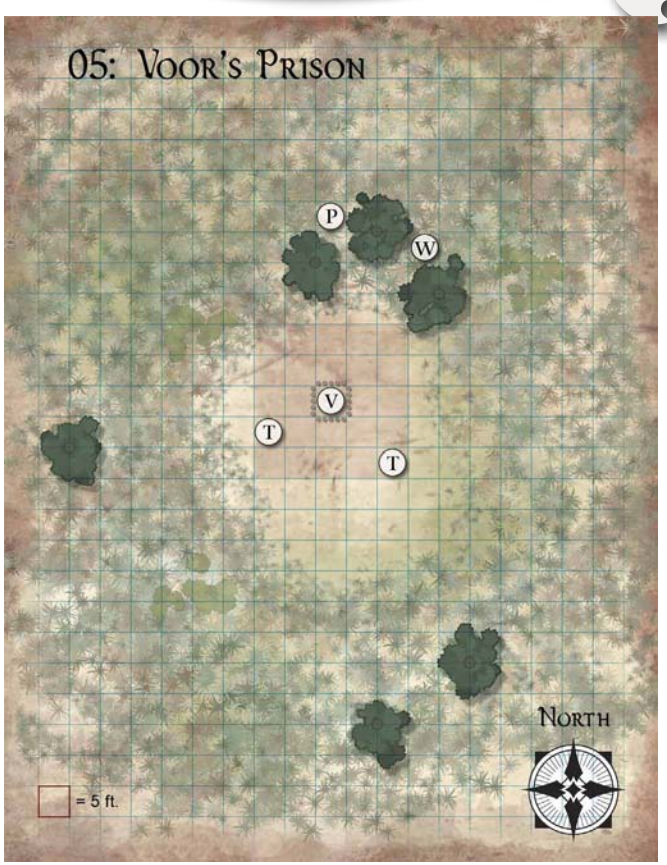
Alignment Evil **Languages** Elven
Skills Athletics +11, Stealth +14, Thievery +12
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 15 (+5)
Equipment iron-shod boots, leather armor, 2 sickles.

so the spriggans try to stay out of the shaded squares immediately adjacent to the cage unless the cobra has been destroyed.

The iron cobra fights until destroyed but does not move farther than 10 squares from its guarded area. The spriggans are too afraid of Emrett to let the PCs rescue Voor, so they fight to the death. However, they do pursue the PCs if they flee.

Spriggan Witherer (W)	**Level 8 Artillery (Leader)**
Small fey humanoid	XP 350
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 20	
Speed 6	
ⓘ **Withering Touch** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
+11 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 4 necrotic damage.	
Sun Scorch (standard, at-will) ✦ **Fire, Radiant**	
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 fire and radiant damage.	
Flattening Wind (standard, recharges when first bloodied)	
Area burst 3 within 10 or close blast 3; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.	
Blood for the Earth (standard; usable only while bloodied, at-will)	
Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +12 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). *Effect:* Each ally within the burst gains 5 temporary hit points.	
Redcap Zeal (when the spriggan witherer bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer, encounter)	
The witherer gains 1d6 + 3 temporary hit points.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Elven
Skills Arcana +8, Athletics +11, Stealth +12	
Str 12 (+5)	**Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 18 (+8)
Equipment iron-shod boots, leather armor	

2 Spriggan Thorns (T)	**Level 6 Soldier**
Small fey humanoid	XP 250 each
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19	
Speed 5	
ⓘ **Short Sword** (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Mark of Thorns (standard, encounter)	
Close burst 5; targets one enemy; the target is affected by the *mark of thorns* until the end of the encounter. While affected by the *mark of thorns*, the target cannot make opportunity attacks against the spriggan thorn, and the target takes 4 damage at the end of any turn in which it did not attack the thorn. In addition, at the start of the target's turn, each of the target's allies adjacent to the target takes 4 damage.	
Drowsing Puncture (minor, when first bloodied)	
If the spriggan thorn hits with its next short sword attack, the target of the attack is dazed until the end of the thorn's next turn and is knocked prone.	
Redcap Zeal (when the spriggan thorn bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points, encounter)	
The thorn gains 1d8 + 2 temporary hit points.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Elven
Skills Athletics +13, Stealth +11	
Str 17 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 18 (+7)
Equipment iron-shod boots, chainmail, light shield, short sword	



Releasing Voor **Level 7**
Skill Challenge XP 600

In this skill challenge, one or more of the adventurers attempt to unseal the magical cage that is slowly killing Voor. It should take place while the remaining PCs battle the cage's guardians. To assist him, the PCs must use their skills to unravel the magic sealing him away; if they learned the command words from Hazar, they can unseal his cage immediately, but they do not gain any additional experience for completing this skill challenge.

PCs can make the skill checks described below only if they are adjacent to the cage, and each skill check requires a standard action unless noted otherwise. The PCs have 10 rounds to free Voor before the unbearable heat does serious harm.

Complexity

2 (6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills

Arcana, Perception, Thievery

Arcana (DC 19): Once per round, on the character's turn, he or she can use their magical knowledge to detect the weak points in Hazar's enchantments or divine how the contraption functions. This skill can be used to gain up to four successes in the challenge.

Perception (DC 19): Once per round, on the character's turn, he or she can hear Voor's muffled cries. He is screaming out the cage's command word ("Release" in Elven). This skill can be used to gain a single success in the challenge.

Thievery (DC 19): Once per round, on the character's turn, he or she can use their impressive mechanical skills to bypass and trick Hazar's wards. This skill can be used to gain up to four successes in the challenge.

Secondary Skills

Nature, Perception

Nature (DC 14, minor action): PCs can use this skill to identify natural weakenesses in the roots Hazar used to form the cage. A success does not count toward victory, but it does grant the PCs a +2 bonus to their next skill check made as part of this challenge.

Perception (DC 14, minor action): PCs can probe the cage for minute flaws in Hazar's design, which they can then exploit. A success does not count toward victory in the challenge, but it does grant the PCs a +2 bonus to their next sill check made as part of this challenge.

Victory

If the PCs have 6 successes before 3 failures, the cage reverts back to its normal form and the deadly heat quickly dissipates. Voor is dehydrated and covered in sweat but relatively safe, and the surviving spriggans cannot reseal the cage for the remainder of the encounter. However, the PCs must free Voor by either picking the lock or bending one of the bars (see Features of the Area for more information). PCs that successfully participated in this skill challenge gain 600 XP.

Failure

If the PCs have 3 failures before 6 successes, they eventually unseal the cage after the 10 rounds has elapsed. The heat has taken its toll on Voor, and he is unconscious and dying at 0 hit points. Each round, make a death saving throw for Voor; if he fails three saving throws, he dies; PCs adjacent to the cage can stabilize Voor with a DC 15 Heal check.
Voor does not regain consciousness until after an extended rest or until the PCs apply a power with the Healing keyword; unfortunately, he has no healing surges remaining. As above, the PCs must free Voor by either picking the lock or bending one of the bars. PCs gain no experience points for failing the skill challenge.

PCs could also opt to take a more direct route and use force to open the cage, but this is a risky option because any attacks could harm Voor. See Features of the Area below for the cage's statistics.

Features of the Area

Acacia Trees: Acacia trees stand between 20 and 40 feet high. Anyone sharing a square with an acacia tree gains cover, and climbing it requires a DC 12 Athletics check. In addition, the thorny acacia trees somehow make the spriggan thorn's *mark of thorns* power more potent. If that power deals damage, it deals an extra 4 damage if the target shares a square with an acacia tree. This extra damage effect also applies to the target's allies.

Voor's Cage: The cramped tree root cage occupies a single 5-foot square and is 8 feet tall. In its normal form, the cage provides cover (including to its occupants) and the roots that form its bars are spaced far enough apart to allow a Medium-sized creature to reach its arms through. (Small creatures can squeeze through the bars with difficulty, but Tiny creatures can move in and out at will.) When the cage seals shut, it provides total cover and blocks both line of sight and line of effect to its occupants. At all times, creatures within the sealed cage have line of sight and effect only to other occupants, and no power with the Teleportation keyword functions within its space. In either form, anyone can clamber atop the cage with a DC 10 Athletics check.

The PCs could conceivably destroy the cage to free Voor, but this is risky because any close or area attack deals half damage to the cage and half to its occupants. The cage has 120 hit points, AC and Reflex 4, Fortitude 12, resist 10 all, and regeneration 5.

Elephant Grass: Squares containing elephant grass count as heavily obscured. The elephant grass also acts as grab grass. Anyone knocked prone in a square containing elephant grass must make a DC 14 Strength check before standing up.

Guarded Area: The shaded squares surrounding Voor's cage (including the square occupied by the cage) count as the iron cobra's guarded area.

Illumination: Bright light during the day, dim light at night.

Canoes: Three canoes are drawn up on the shore of the lake near this location. See page 66 for details.

Treasure: The spriggans keep two *potions of healing* handy in case of emergencies, storing them in a wooden box next to Voor's provisions (a clay water jug and some moldy rations that are unappealing to the rapacious shadow hounds).

Encounter 06: The Isle of the Obelisk

Encounter Level 10 (XP 2,600)

Setup

Emrett Mazrid (E)
Rami, comet tail eagle (R)
fang golem (F)
2 spriggan thorns (T)

The fang golem normally prowls the open spaces south of the obelisk, but Rami (the only bird in the oasis not loyal to Hazar) soars overhead. If either detects the PCs' approach (automatic if they use a canoe to paddle across the lake during the day), they quickly alert their mistress and prepare to repel the intruders. Otherwise, Emrett remains absorbed by her work, and stealthy PCs find her intensively studying a particular section of hieroglyphs, while her jaded spriggan bodyguards look on.

If the island's inhabitants discover the PCs' approach, read:

A hideous, lion-shaped construct that appears to be a mélange of yellowed ivory tusks and broken teeth ambles into view, while overhead, one of those strange fiery eagles shrieks in fury and alarm.

When the PCs first see Emrett, read:

A diaphanous sari woven from the finest blue silk is wrapped around the lithe body of the striking female half-elf standing before you. Intricate arcane runes are painted in henna up and down her bare arms.

Tactics

The fang golem opens fire as soon as the PCs come within range of its *barrage of spikes*; it then follows up with a fusillade of *spike volleys*, switching back to *barrage of spikes* when that power recharges. Though its *spike volley* should not pose a significant risk to the PCs' canoes, its *barrage of spikes* does, and you should keep track of any damage dealt to them in case they sink.

Once the PCs come ashore, the fang golem tries to pin them against the water's edge or on the beach, allowing enough time for Emrett and the spriggans to move up and engage. The fang golem is reluctant to enter melee, but if severely damaged, it wades into the center of the fight and intentionally provokes opportunity attacks to catch as many PCs as possible in its *death burst*.

Rami does not wait for the PCs to come ashore either; instead, he repeatedly charges from the highest altitude possible, using *comet fall* and *fiery impact* to its maximum effect and fighting as long as his mistress lives. If Rami scores a critical hit against a PC riding in a canoe, the impact causes the canoe to capsize, forcing its passengers into the lake. Flipping a capsized canoe is a minor action that requires a DC 12 Athletics check, while climbing back into it requires another DC 12 Athletics check and a move action. At the start of each round, a capsized canoe slides 3 squares counter-clockwise.

Each spriggan thorn enters combat by first using their *mark of thorns* power, preferably against a leader or defender. They try to stay mobile and concentrate their attacks against any PCs damaged by the fang golem, to take advantage of its *verdant surge*. If any PC deals a large amount of damage or seriously threatens Emrett, the thorns attempt to slow them down with a *drowsing puncture*. Both thorns zealously fight to the

Emrett Mazrid (E)	**Level 10 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf	XP 1,000
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 204; **Bloodied** 102	
AC 24; **Fortitude** 20; **Reflex** 22; **Will** 24	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6, teleport 3; see also *scorpion strike* and *unseelie stride*	
Action Points 1	
Venomous Jambiya (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison, Weapon** +15 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).	
Eldritch Blast (standard; at-will) ✦ **Implement** Ranged 10; +13 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 7 damage.	
Scorpion Strike (standard; at-will) Emrett can make two *venomous jambiya* attacks, or one *venomous jambiya* attack and one *eldritch blast* attack. Emrett can shift one square after each attack.	
Malignant Whispers (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Charm, Illusion, Psychic** Ranged 10; +13 vs. Will; targets enemies, deafened creatures are immune; the target takes 3d6 + 4 psychic damage and makes a basic attack against its nearest ally as a free action.	
Cruel Splendor (standard; encounter) ✦ **Charm, Necrotic, Teleportation** Close burst 3; +11 vs. Will; Emrett pulls the target 2 squares, and the target is dazed and cannot attack Emrett (save ends both); Emrett then teleports 3 squares. *Aftereffect*: 3d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target is blinded until the end of its next turn. *Miss*: The target is dazed (save ends).	
Master's Favor (free action; encounter) Emrett can reroll an attack roll, skill check, ability check, or saving throw, using the higher of the two results.	
Unseelie Stride (immediate reaction, triggers when Emrett is hit by a melee or close attack; recharges when Emrett is first bloodied or when an enemy drops to 0 hit points) ✦ **Teleportation** Emrett teleports 5 squares and gains concealment until the end of her next turn.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Elven, Giant, Primordial
Skills Arcana +14, Bluff +14, Diplomacy +11, History +14, Insight +7, Religion +10	
Str 10 (+5)	**Dex** 13 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 14 (+7)	**Int** 18 (+9) **Cha** 18 (+9)
Equipment jambiya (dagger)	

2 Spriggan Thorns (T)	Level 6 Soldier
Small fey humanoid	XP 250 each
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19	
Speed 5	
Short Sword (standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Mark of Thorns (standard, encounter)	
Close burst 5; targets one enemy; the target is affected by the *mark of thorns* until the end of the encounter. While affected by the *mark of thorns*, the target cannot make opportunity attacks against the spriggan thorn, and the target takes 4 damage at the end of any turn in which it did not attack the thorn. In addition, at the start of the target's turn, each of the target's allies adjacent to the target takes 4 damage.	
Drowsing Puncture (minor, when first bloodied)	
If the spriggan thorn hits with its next short sword attack, the target of the attack is dazed until the end of the thorn's next turn and is knocked prone.	
Redcap Zeal (when the spriggan thorn bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer, encounter)	
The thorn gains 1d8 + 2 temporary hit points.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Elven
Skills Athletics +13, Stealth +11	
Str 17 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 18 (+7)
Equipment iron-shod boots, chainmail, light shield, short sword	

death as long as Emrett lives, but if the PCs kill her, they break off the attack and try to flee in the nearest canoe.

Emrett strides confidently into battle and immediately uses *cruel splendor*. She then employs *malignant whispers* to turn the PCs against each other, resorting to repeated *scorpion strikes* as she waits for it to recharge. Emrett's pact with her master (see "Emrett Mazrid," page 63) allows her to benefit from the fang golem's *verdant surge* power, so she also concentrates her attacks against foes damaged by it.

Fang Golem (F)	Level 9 Elite Artillery
Large fey animate (construct)	XP 800
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78; see also *death burst*	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 21; **Reflex** 23; **Will** 19	
Immune disease, fear, sleep; **Vulnerable** 5 thunder	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6 (forest walk)	
Action Points 1	
Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.	
Spike (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 10/20; +16 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Spike Volley (standard; at-will)	
The fang golem makes two spike attacks. If both spikes hit the same target, that target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends) and is also restrained until the end of its next turn.	
Death Burst (when the fang golem drops to 0 hit points)	
The fang golem explodes in a burst of jagged shards. Close burst 1; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 damage	
Barrage of Spikes (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
Area burst 1 within 12; +12 vs. Reflex; 4d6 + 4 damage. *Miss:* Half damage.	
Verdant Surge	
Until the end of the encounter, any enemy damaged by a fang golem suffers a -2 penalty to saving throws made to end ongoing damage or effects caused by the powers of a creature with the fey origin.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 16 (+7)	**Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 18 (+8)	**Int** 3 (+0) **Cha** 3 (+0)

When bloodied, Emrett tries to make her way back to the obelisk, intending to use a standard action to recharge *cruel splendor*, spending her action point to use it if more than one PC followed her into range. The thought of abandoning the oasis does not cross Emrett's mind, and she fights to the death to protect her "birthright." However, if she nears her end and Voor is present, she does her best to take her revenge by killing her former academic nemesis.

Rami, Comet Tail Eagle (R)	Level 7 Brute
Medium elemental beast (fire)	XP 300
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
Dissipating Heat (Fire) aura 1; after a comet tail eagle charges, any creature that enters or begins its turn within the aura takes 5 fire damage. The aura lasts until the beginning of the comet tail eagle's next turn.	
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 17	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 20 fire	
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 10 (hover); see also *comet fall*	
Talon (standard; at-will)	
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.	
Comet Fall	
A comet tail eagle does not provoke opportunity attacks while charging, and following the charge, it can shift 3 squares as a free action.	
Fiery Impact ✦ Fire	
For every square a comet tail eagle moves while charging, it deals 2 extra fire damage on a hit.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 14 (+6)	**Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Immediately following Emrett's demise, a sentinel patrol descends upon any of her surviving minions and tears them apart; Hazar arrives, accompanied by another sentinel patrol, several minutes later (see "Development" for details).

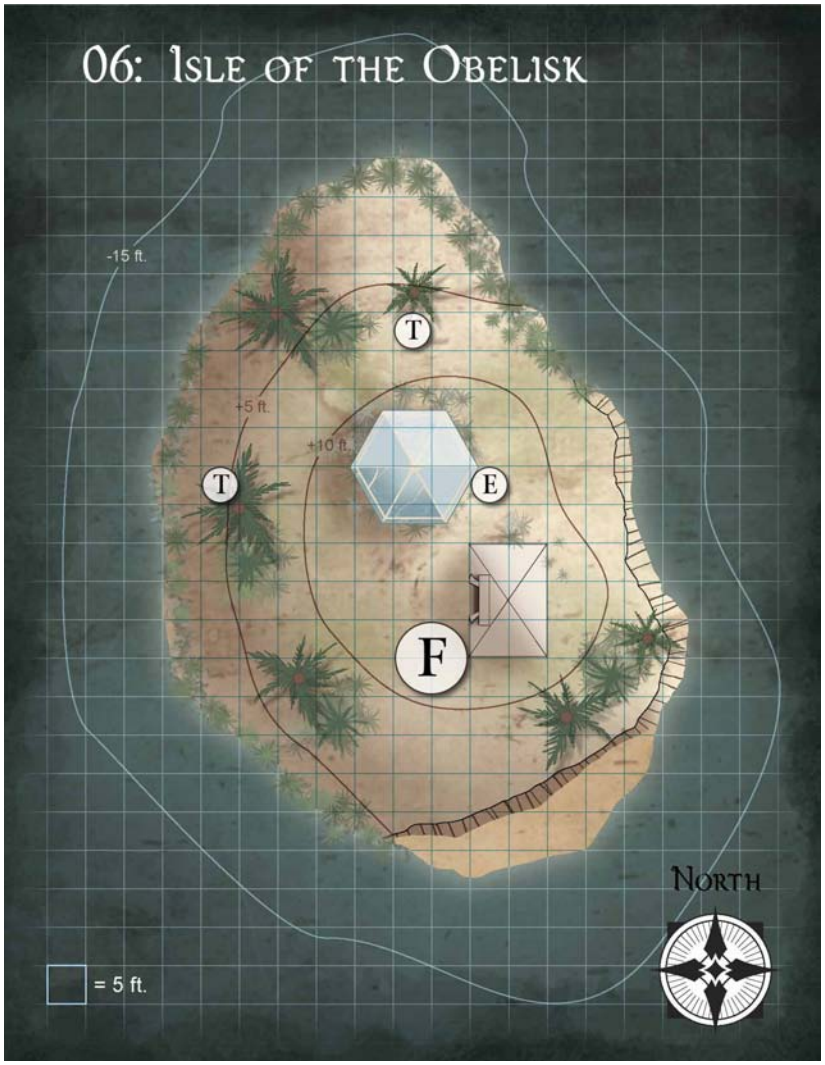
Playing Emrett

Emrett is extremely spiteful and possessed of unbridled arrogance. During battle, she constantly brags about her superior beauty, intellect, arcane talent, fighting prowess, and fashion sense. She interrupts her self-indulgent monologue only to sling condescending, even petty, insults at the PCs while heaping abuse upon her loyal minions. She is self-deluded until the end, and when the PCs finally strike the killing blow, she looks up at them in disbelief, murmuring, "You've killed ... not ... possible," from her bloodstained lips before expiring.

Development

If the PCs flee the island and Emrett survives, she gathers all her surviving followers and hunts them down, hoping to slay them before they can inform anyone of her schemes. Hazar regards them as pathetic failures and abrogates her agreement with the PCs. To allay Emrett's suspicions, she has the sentinels actively join the hunt, but their relationship remains extremely tense.

If the PCs kill Emrett, then Hazar (accompanied by two sentinel patrols) flies to the island both to congratulate them and remind them that as part of their agreement, they must now assist in the destruction of Emrett's remaining minions. After personally desecrating Emrett's corpse, the sphinx and her retinue accompanies the PCs to areas O5, O3, and O1, expecting them to do most of the fighting. (To keep up appearances, though, she provides token assistance.) After the ensuing massacre, Hazar immediately turns on the hopefully weakened PCs, showing no mercy.



Features of the Area

Canoe: A wooden canoe lies on the beach, and a pair of oars and a hooded oil lamp rests at the bottom. Each morning and again after dusk, the two spriggan thorns ferry their mistress across the lake.

Clump of Reeds: Squares containing reeds are lightly obscured. The reeds also count as grab grass; any creatures knocked prone in a square containing a clump of reeds must make a DC 14 Strength check to stand up.

Deep Water: The depth of the lake dramatically increases a few yards offshore, and the power of the nearby portal creates a powerful current. A DC 15 Athletics check is required to swim through these squares. The current slides any creatures caught in it 3 squares counter-clockwise each round.

Palm Trees: The palm trees stand between 40 to 60 feet high; anyone sharing a square with a tree gains cover. Climbing a tree requires a DC 12 Athletics check.

Wooden Canoe
Large vehicle

HP 60 **Space** 2 squares by 2 squares **Cost** 20 gp
AC 4, **Fortitude** 10, **Reflex** 3
Speed swim 5

Pilot
The pilot must steer and paddle with an oar, requiring both hands.

Crew
A wooden canoe does not require any additional crew. However, a canoe paddled by two creatures gains an additional 2 squares of movement.

Load
Three Medium creatures; 100 pounds of gear.

Out of Control
An out-of-control wooden canoe comes to a stop at the beginning of its turn. At the DM's discretion, it might continue in the direction of a strong current at half speed.

Cover
A wooden canoe provides cover to its passengers and pilot.

Quartz Obelisk: The obelisk is strangely translucent and does not block line of sight or effect. Once per encounter, a creature with the fey origin (including fey pact warlocks and Emrett) or a member of a primal class can touch the obelisk and spend a minor action to regain a spent encounter power, or a standard action to regain a spent daily power. Creatures that do not otherwise meet these criteria can also take advantage of this boon by making a DC 20 Nature check.

Rise: It requires a DC 10 Athletics check to climb these small escarpments. Creatures that fall or are pushed over the edge take no damage but are knocked prone.

Sandy Beach: The loose sand on the beach counts as difficult terrain.

Shallow Water: Medium-sized and larger creatures without the aquatic keyword can walk normally through water squares adjacent to the island, though they count as difficult terrain. Small and smaller creatures must swim, requiring a DC 12 Athletics check.

Tent: A creature inside the tent has total concealment against those outside and vice versa. Creatures cannot end their movement in a square occupied by the tent unless they enter it, and they can do so only through an opening; dealing 5 damage to the tent tears a gap large enough for a Medium-sized creature to pass through. Cutting four of the six support ropes (each has 5 hit points) collapses a tent, restraining and blinding anyone inside it until the end of their next turn as they fumble to escape. In addition, creatures and objects within the tent gain 10 fire resistance.

Treasure: The ivory collected from the vanquished fang golem is worth 400 gp.

About the Author

"Oasis of the Golden Peacock" is Tim Eagon's first published RPG work. He would like to thank his fiancée Jeanneen for twice putting up with all the long hours spent writing it.

PARAGON
11-20

Dungeon Delve

Crown of the Troll King

An adventure for 11th-level characters

By Daniel Marthaler

illustrations by Sam Wood ✦ cartography by Jason A. Engle

Tornak, the self-proclaimed King of the Trolls, and his troll "court" are something of a local legend. He has raided nearby settlements for years, using tactics that were remarkably complex and disciplined (for a troll, anyway). His raiders have evaded or brutally destroyed any forces sent to combat them. Many brave and righteous heroes have set off into the mountains to end this scourge; all have met their end at Tornak's hands. The ancient, black iron crown beaten into the flesh of his head is rumored to bind the spirits of those he consumes to his will, preventing them from escaping to their rightful afterlife as well as granting him arcane powers normally beyond the reach of a simple troll.

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Expanding the Delve

The hunt for Tornak's lair through the harsh mountains can be expanded into a skill challenge to overcome the high cliffs, jagged rocks, hostile environment, and the trolls' attempts to cover their tracks or mislead pursuers. Other inhabitants of the mountains, such as wyverns, hill giants, manticores, or dire bears, might object to trespassers stumbling into their territory. Don't forget Tornak's legendary craftiness; he might have set lethal rock falls or other traps, or commanded a force of trolls (for example, a troll bloodchanter, a cave troll mangler, and three fanged trolls) to wait above a narrow pass and ambush anyone foolish enough to follow him.

Tornak's crown is not given statistics in this adventure, and in fact, the adventure assumes the crown vanishes upon Tornak's defeat, as putting the item in the hands of the PCs is not the goal or intent of the adventure. That said, the crown can also be a prime source of future adventures, so keeping it around is a fine approach. This enables you to directly use the crown as a springboard for further adventure. If you pursue this option, you can create the statistics for the artifact using the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*® (page 164).

Should they keep the crown, as the PCs continue to adventure, it would make sense for other villainous powers to try and retrieve it. For example, perhaps one of the souls trapped in the crown finds a way to contact a still-living villainous ally and summons that creature to steal the crown. Tornak might have had allies who find out about his death and seek the crown, knowing its power and potential. Whatever you decide, dealing with the crown, while secondary to this adventure, is sure to provide a number of options for the future, if you'd like.

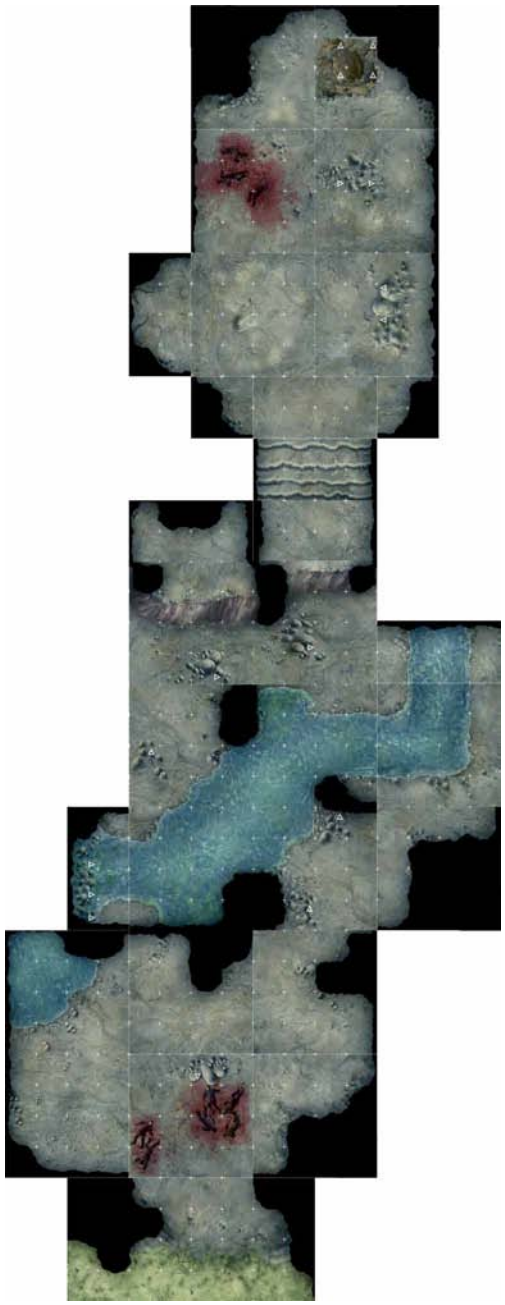
The evil artifact might begin to whisper to one of the PCs after they retrieve it. Alternatively, perhaps a soul trapped in the crown can be a source of adventure, provided you arrange for the PCs to find a way to converse with one of the spirits. Freeing the spirits could be difficult, and each of the four trapped in the crown in this adventure could be the source of another adventure that sends the PCs on a quest to free each spirit from the item.

The Crown of Fallen Heroes

The *crown of fallen heroes* is an evil artifact forged after the first time a mortal hero slew a god. Fearing their deaths at the hands of ambitious mortals, a cabal of gods worked together to create a tool that would stem this danger. A crown grand enough to attract those mortals with designs on apotheosis, it would contrive to gather heroic souls and contain them before they could threaten the gods.

Since its creation, the *crown of fallen heroes* has moved beyond absorbing heroic souls. It has come to hunger for the power that those souls grant it. It denies them their final resting place and absorbs a sliver of their power. Its ironic goal is to accrue enough strength to topple the gods themselves and place itself at the head of the cosmos as the all-spirit.

Tornak is a worthwhile bearer for the time being. When the troll king dies, the *crown of fallen heroes* will move on. Heroes that can destroy its host might find a way to destroy it as well, and it is not yet ready for that. The *crown* disappears, and the PCs might soon hear again of a villain who commands a horde of shades and who is eager to slay heroes.



Encounter 11–1: Ugly Brutes

Encounter Level 11 (3,000 XP)

1 cave troll mangler (C)
1 venom-eye basilisk (V)
3 fanged trolls (F)

Setup

The PCs have discovered the halls of the Troll King. A warm reception waits within.

The PCs begin on the green, grassy area outside the cave. The trolls believe they remain undiscovered and have no guards posted. Don't place the basilisk until it is spotted or attacks on its initiative.

When the PCs enter the cave, read:

The prodigious stench flowing from the cave is almost tangible. The entrance passage quickly opens into a large cavern strewn with all manner of filth. Several hulking figures can be seen squatting or standing in the dim light.

Perception Check

DC 15: *They don't seem to be expecting trouble. The biggest one appears to be half asleep.*

DC 21: *A glint of green light catches your eye as a large but low shape shifts in the darkness at the back of the cave. Whatever hides there is no troll.*

Cave Troll Mangler (C) **Level 14 Brute**
Large natural humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +14
HP 170; **Bloodied** 85
Regeneration 10
AC 26; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the cave troll mangler takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
Speed 8

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage, and the target is grabbed. A cave troll mangler can grab up to two targets at once.

Bash (standard; must be grabbing a creature; at-will)
Reach 2; targets a creature not grabbed by the cave troll mangler; +17 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and the grabbed creature takes half this damage and is dazed (save ends). When grabbing a creature wearing heavy armor, the cave troll mangler deals +5 damage with this attack, but the grabbed creature is not dazed.

Smash and Thrash (standard; must be grabbing a creature; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The cave troll mangler makes a *bash* attack against each enemy within 2 squares.

Hurl (standard; must be grabbing a creature; at-will)
Ranged 10; targets a creature not grabbed by the cave troll mangler; the cave troll mangler throws a creature grabbed by it to a square adjacent to the target, where it lands prone; +17 vs. AC; 3d6 + 6 damage and the target is knocked prone, and the grabbed creature takes half this damage and is dazed (save ends). When grabbing a creature wearing heavy armor, the cave troll mangler deals +5 damage with this attack, but the grabbed creature is not dazed.

Troll Healing ✦ Healing
If the cave troll mangler is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 10 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the cave troll mangler while it is at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Str 24 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 5 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+7)

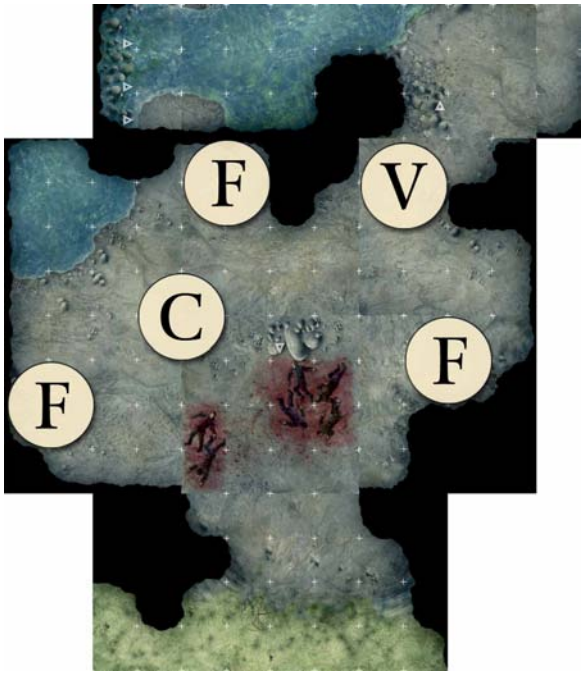
Venom-Eye Basilisk (V) **Level 10 Artillery**
Large natural beast (reptile) XP 500

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 87; **Bloodied** 43
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21
Immune poison
Speed 6

Bite (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

Venomous Gaze (standard; at-will) ✦ **Gaze, Poison**
Area burst 1 within 10; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 poison damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends). As long as the target is taking ongoing poison damage from this attack, the target deals 2 poison damage to all creatures adjacent to it at the start of its turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +11
Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+4)



3 Fanged Trolls (F)	Level 10 Soldier
Large natural humanoid	XP 500 each
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +10	
HP 109; **Bloodied** 54	
Regeneration 10	
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the fanged troll takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)	
Speed 8	
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage, and the target is grabbed.	
⸸ **Gnaw** (standard; usable only against a grabbed target; at-will)	
+17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Threatening Reach	
The fanged troll can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).	
Troll Healing ✦ Healing	
If the fanged troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 10 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the fanged troll while it is at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant	
Skills Athletics +16, Endurance +15	
Str 22 (+11) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+5)	
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 9 (+4) **Cha** 8 (+4)	

Tactics

The cave troll mangler rushes into combat as soon as it gets wind of an enemy. Once it grabs a PC, it uses *smash and thrash* to hit as many PCs as possible whenever the power has recharged. It uses *hurl* only against a hero who seriously damages it or who employs fire or acid from a distance. The basilisk hangs back and uses *venomous gaze* to poison as many characters as possible without any regard for the trolls' positions. The fanged trolls use their threatening reach to keep PCs contained and *gnaw* whatever tasty morsel they grab. All the denizens of this cave concentrate their attacks against characters that deal fire or acid damage, and the trolls will risk opportunity attacks to get at such a threat, provided such an attack wouldn't kill them. They are deathly afraid of Tornak and fight to the end.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The light from the cave opening is strong enough to provide bright illumination during the day. At night the trolls use a few torches the size of campfires to keep the cavern relatively well lit.

Pool of Offal: The shallow pool of foul-smelling sludge counts as difficult terrain and imposes a –2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends) to anyone standing in it. Once a save has been made, that character is immune to this effect for the remainder of the encounter. The inhabitants of the cave are accustomed to the stench and do not suffer the penalty.

Encounter 11–2: New Tricks

Encounter Level 12 (3,575 XP)

1 iron gorgon (G)
2 bladerager trolls (R)
1 troll bloodchanter (B)
5 troll runts (N)

Setup

Further into the cave, the PCs encounter a group of trolls that act with surprising tactical awareness.

The PCs enter from the cave where the last encounter took place. These trolls heard the commotion from the fight and have positioned themselves to attack their guests.

When the characters enter the second cavern, read:

More trolls lurk in the cavern ahead, but these seem ready for you. Two ferocious-looking trolls with wickedly long, black claws into position alongside a snorting, bull-like creature, as smaller trolls—the smallest you've ever seen—scurry at their feet. A rearmost troll chants in the language of giants as it waves a crude totem covered in dried blood.

Troll Bloodchanter (B) Level 12 Controller (Leader)
Large natural humanoid XP 700

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +12
HP 126; **Bloodied** 63; see also *troll healing*
Regeneration 10
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the troll bloodchanter takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
Speed 8

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the bloodchanter pushes the target 1 square.

Hex of the Blood Scent (standard; at-will) ✦ **Implement, Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends). When the target takes ongoing damage from this power, each ally within 3 squares of the target can shift 1 square closer to the target as a free action.

Chant of Exsanguination (standard; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Implement**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +16 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 damage and the target is dazed (save ends). *Each Failed Save:* One ally within 5 squares of the target regains 10 hit points.

Quickened Blood (immediate reaction, when an ally within 10 squares of the bloodchanter regains hit points from *troll healing*; at-will) ✦ **Healing, Implement**
Close burst 10; the triggering ally regains 20 hit points.

Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**
If the troll bloodchanter is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 10 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the bloodchanter while it is at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Athletics +15, Endurance +14
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 22 (+12) **Int** 16 (+9) **Cha** 10 (+6)
Equipment blood-coated bone totem

5 Troll Runts (N) Level 12 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 24; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Speed 8

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 10 damage.

Troll Runt Healing ✦ **Healing**
If the troll runt is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 1 hit point. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the troll runt while it is at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 5 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+6)

Iron Gorgon (G) Level 11 Soldier
Large elemental beast (earth) XP 600

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +8; truesight 6
HP 120; **Bloodied** 60
AC 25; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21
Immune knocked prone, petrification, push/pull/slide
Speed 6 (earth walk)

⊕ **Gore** (standard; at-will)
+17 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.

Earthshaking Charge (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The iron gorgon makes a charge attack; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 6 damage, and if the target is Medium or smaller, it is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.

Trample (standard; at-will)
The iron gorgon can move up to its speed and enter enemies' spaces. This movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the iron gorgon must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, the gorgon makes a trample attack: +15 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Petrifying Breath (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3; gorgons are immune; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 poison damage, and the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both). *First Failed Save:* The target is immobilized instead of dazed and slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Save:* The target is petrified (no save).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 22 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 17 (+8)
Con 24 (+12) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 6 (+3)

2 Bladerager Trolls (R)	Level 12 Brute
Large natural humanoid	XP 700 each
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +9	
HP 151; **Bloodied** 75; see also *death burst*	
Regeneration 10	
AC 24; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23	
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the bladerager troll takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)	
Speed 7	
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage.	
⸸ **Bladerager Rend** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
✧ **Death Burst** (when the bladerager troll drops to 0 hit points)	
The troll explodes in a burst of bone shrapnel: close burst 2; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant	
Skills Athletics +17, Endurance +16	
Str 23 (+12) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 16 (+9)	
Con 21 (+11) **Int** 3 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+6)	

Tactics

The bloodchanter uses *chant of exsanguination* on as many PCs as possible, early in the fight. It commands other trolls to attack the PCs' leaders and keep it safe from retaliation. The others use their powers recklessly as soon as they are available. All of the trolls attack fire- and acid-wielding enemies in preference to any others and fight to the death.

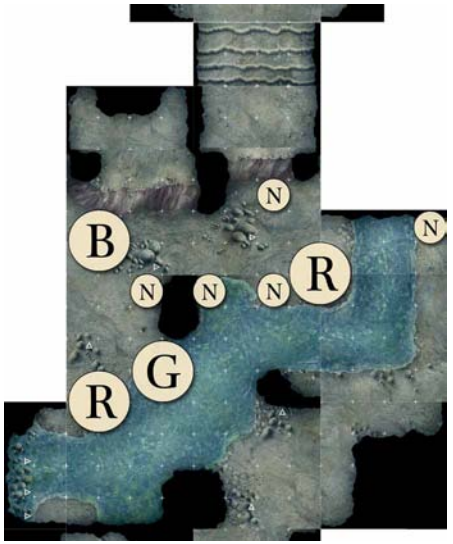
The troll runts try to provide flanks with the bladeragers and gorgon.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Oversized torches provide adequate light.

River of Offal: The shallow stream of foul-smelling sludge counts as difficult terrain and imposes a –2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends) to anyone standing in it. Once a save has been made, that character is immune to this effect for the remainder of the encounter. The inhabitants of the cave are accustomed to the stench and do not suffer the penalty, although they are still impacted by the difficult terrain.

Cliffs: The two cliff faces are 20 feet high and can be scaled with a DC 15 Athletics check.



Encounter 11-3: Court of the Troll King

Encounter Level 14 (5,900 XP)

Tornak (T)
1 cave troll mangler (W)
1 troll bloodchanter (B)
1 bladerager troll (R)
3 fanged trolls (F)

Setup

When the PCs enter, Tornak is standing in front of the hide-draped rocks that serve as his throne. This is not the first time would-be heroes have invaded his lair seeking his head, and he is always ready for a good snack. The rest of the trolls are arrayed around the room.

When the characters enter the cavern, read:
Once more a cavern opens before you, and once more the stench of troll washes over you. More of the massive hulks can be seen within. An immense troll stands before a crude throne covered with uncured hides and captured banners. A crown of black iron wrought in an ancient design is hammered—literally, complete with twisted iron nails—onto his head, although his green skin has grown over the crown's black iron band in places. The troll offers a smile filled with hideous teeth and beckons you forward.

Perception Check
DC 15: *Among the debris and half-eaten bodies, you spot holy symbols, weapons of quality workmanship, fragments of armor, and even a charred staff. Clearly you are not the first to come here to claim Tornak's head.*
DC 20: *Shadows of figures flit about in the corners of your eyes. Something is not right here.*

Religion Check (if the PC can see the shadows)
DC 20: *The shadowy figures are the trapped souls of the departed. Something is keeping them from escaping to their proper afterlife.*

Tornak (T)	**Level 14 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)**
Large natural humanoid, troll	XP 2,000
Initiative +12	**Senses** Perception +15
HP 260; **Bloodied** 130; see also *troll healing*	
Regeneration 10	
AC 28; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 24	
Vulnerable acid or fire (if Tornak takes acid or fire damage, his regeneration does not function until the end of his next turn)	
Speed 7	
Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage.	
Necrotic Bolt (standard, at-will)	
Ranged 10; +18 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 necrotic damage.	
Wrath of the Troll King (standard; at-will)	
Tornak makes two *claw* attacks.	
Shadowed Host (when Tornak rolls initiative or is first bloodied; at-will)	
Close burst 10; Tornak calls four shades of fallen heroes from the crown. Each appears in one square within the burst. They enter the initiative order immediately after Tornak and can act normally in the round they appear. If a shade of fallen heroes ends its turn more than 20 squares from Tornak, it is destroyed.	
Summon Shade (minor 1/round; requires fewer than four shades of fallen heroes within 20 squares of Tornak; at-will)	
Close burst 10; Tornak calls a shade of fallen heroes from the crown into one square within the burst. Tornak cannot summon more than four shades at one time, between this power and *shadowed host*. The shade enters the initiative order immediately after Tornak and can act normally in the round it appears. If the shade of fallen heroes ends its turn more than 20 squares from Tornak, it is destroyed.	
Crown of Shades (move; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**	
Tornak swaps places with a shade of fallen heroes within 10 squares of him.	
Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**	
If Tornak is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, he falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of his next turn, when he regains 10 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to Tornak while he is at 0 hit points, he is destroyed.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Str 24 (+14)	**Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 16 (+10)
Con 20 (+12)	**Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 14 (+9)

Shade of Fallen Heroes **Level 10 Minion**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP –

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)

Shade Strike (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 8 necrotic damage.

Shadow Lash (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Reflex; 8 necrotic damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Str 14 (+7) **Dex** 16 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+7)

Describing the Fallen Heroes

To give players the sense that Tornak and his crown have done something terrible, describe each of the shades that he summons with the characteristics of a PC race and class. If one carries a fullblade and makes sweeping cuts and another other hurls bolts of fire from a rod, it will resonate with the players. Change the damage type that one shade deals to reinforce the descriptions mechanically. Give the players the sense that Tornak could do this to them, and give them a sense that their soul is being drawn to the crown when they drop to 0 hit points, to put a good scare into them.

Cave Troll Mangler (C) **Level 14 Brute**
Large natural humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +14
HP 170; **Bloodied** 85
Regeneration 10
AC 26; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the cave troll mangler takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
Speed 8

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage, and the target is grabbed. A cave troll mangler can grab up to two targets at once.

Bash (standard; must be grabbing a creature; at-will)
Reach 2; targets a creature not grabbed by the cave troll mangler; +17 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and the grabbed creature takes half this damage and is dazed (save ends). When grabbing a creature wearing heavy armor, the cave troll mangler deals +5 damage with this attack, but the grabbed creature is not dazed.

Smash and Thrash (standard; must be grabbing a creature; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The cave troll mangler makes a *bash* attack against each enemy within 2 squares.

Hurl (standard; must be grabbing a creature; at-will)
Ranged 10; targets a creature not grabbed by the cave troll mangler; the cave troll mangler throws a creature grabbed by it to a square adjacent to the target, where it lands prone; +17 vs. AC; 3d6 + 6 damage and the target is knocked prone, and the grabbed creature takes half this damage and is dazed (save ends). When grabbing a creature wearing heavy armor, the cave troll mangler deals +5 damage with this attack, but the grabbed creature is not dazed.

Troll Healing ✦ Healing
If the cave troll mangler is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 10 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the cave troll mangler while it is at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Str 24 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 5 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+7)

Bladerager Troll (R) **Level 12 Brute**
Large natural humanoid XP 700 each

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 151; **Bloodied** 75; see also *death burst*
Regeneration 10
AC 24; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the bladerager troll takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
Speed 7

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage.

Bladerager Rend (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Death Burst (when the bladerager troll drops to 0 hit points)
The troll explodes in a burst of bone shrapnel: close burst 2; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +17, Endurance +16
Str 23 (+12) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 21 (+11) **Int** 3 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+6)

Troll Bloodchanter (B) Level 12 Controller (Leader)
Large natural humanoid XP 700

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +12
HP 126; **Bloodied** 63; see also *troll healing*
Regeneration 10
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the troll bloodchanter takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
Speed 8

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the bloodchanter pushes the target 1 square.

Hex of the Blood Scent (standard; at-will) ✦ **Implement, Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends). When the target takes ongoing damage from this power, each ally within 3 squares of the target can shift 1 square closer to the target as a free action.

Chant of Exsanguination (standard; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Implement**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +16 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 damage and the target is dazed (save ends). *Each Failed Save:* One ally within 5 squares of the target regains 10 hit points.

Quickened Blood (immediate reaction, when an ally within 10 squares of the bloodchanter regains hit points from *troll healing*; at-will) ✦ **Healing, Implement**
Close burst 10; the triggering ally regains 20 hit points.

Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**
If the troll bloodchanter is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 10 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the bloodchanter while it is at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Athletics +15, Endurance +14
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 22 (+12) **Int** 16 (+9) **Cha** 10 (+6)
Equipment blood coated bone totem

3 Fanged Trolls (F) Level 10 Soldier
Large natural humanoid XP 500 each

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 109; **Bloodied** 54
Regeneration 10
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18
Vulnerable acid or fire (if the fanged troll takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
Speed 8

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage, and the target is grabbed.

Gnaw (standard; usable only against a grabbed target; at-will)
+17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Threatening Reach
The fanged troll can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**
If the fanged troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 10 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the fanged troll while it is at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +16, Endurance +15
Str 22 (+11) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 9 (+4) **Cha** 8 (+4)

Tactics

Tornak is an intelligent fighter who revels in combat. He shouts challenges and taunts in Common and orders to his followers in Giant as he seeks to engage the most dangerous-looking combatant. He generally makes two claw attacks each round. He uses *crown of shades* at nearly every opportunity to try and improve his position on the battlefield, and he reserves *necrotic bolt* for annoying PCs he can't engage in melee. He keeps as many shades on the field as possible, which likely means he summons one each round if the PCs start destroying his shades.

The other trolls act with sound tactics directed by Tornak and the bloodchanter. They try to keep the bloodchanter free of melee, set up flanks, keep ranged PCs tied up in melee, and go after support characters whenever possible. PCs with fire or acid attacks are priority targets.

The trolls are motivated by an abject terror of Tornak and fight to the death. Tornak is too proud and spiteful to surrender, preferring to take as many PCs as possible with him if the battle sours. Should Tornak be destroyed, any remaining shades of fallen heroes discorporate into shadow and mist as their souls are freed to move on.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Lit torches in sconces provide bright light throughout the cavern.

Treasure: Tornak keeps the following heaped about his throne: one level 14 magic item; one drinking horn inlaid with gold, platinum, and gemstones worth 1,500 gp; 1 delicate silver and fire opal necklace of eladrin design worth 2,500 gp; 10 garnets worth 100 gp each; and 1,000 gp.

about the author
Daniel Marthaler is an avid gamer with soaring delusions of grandeur and dreams of breaking into the industry. Despite being 6' 3", he has a peculiar love of the wee races that populate the game, most notably the gnomes and kobolds.

EBERRON

Campaign Workbook: The Blasphemer

By James Wyatt

illustration by Patrick McEnvoy

Dragons fly before the Blasphemer's legions,
scouring the earth of his righteous foes.
Carnage rises in the wake of his passing,
purging all life from those who oppose him.
Vultures wheel where dragons flew,
picking the bones of the numberless dead.
But the Blasphemer's end lies in the void,
in the maelstrom that pulls him down
to darkness.
On his lips are words of blasphemy,
the words of creation unspoken.
In his ears are the screams of his foes,
bringing delight to his heart.
When he speaks all doors are opened
and all chains are broken,
all law is repealed and chaos is unbound.

The earth groaned in protest and pain as the dragonfire coursed over it. Kathrik Mel crouched down and placed his palm on the ground. The grass died at his touch, and the earth's outcry grew louder in his ears. He lifted his hand, looked at his fingers, and rubbed away flecks of gray ash from the tips. He drew a slow breath, and the mingled aromas of autumn and smoke turned to rot in his nostrils. He stood, stretched his arms wide, and shouted.

"Forward! Trample their bones into the ground! For Kathrik Mel!"

His warriors took up the cry: "Kathrik Mel! Kathrik Mel!"

He felt the heat of the dragonfire at his back and smiled. The warriors before him were too slow. He spoke a word, and fire leaped around him to lash at their backs, impelling them forward. For a moment he was bathed in fire, and he cackled.

As he strode behind his onrushing horde, he listened to the cries of the earth, searching for the painful harmonies of the Gatekeepers' seal and the stifled chorus behind it. Softly, he began to hum his part of that entropic chorus, a song of madness that would unmake the seal—the song that would soon unmake the world.

*****

The bulk of the Aundairian forces had closed the gap while Gaven faced the dragon, and bodies in Aundairian blue lay alongside those in the leather and fur of the Carrion Tribes, their blood flowing together on the gore-slick ground. As the wind whipped around him, he was a still point in the center of a raging tempest, the noise of battle swept away in the whirlwind. He was seized with the sudden sense that he'd been there before—witnessed this exact scene before. A crush of thunder shook the earth, and the wind fell.

An alien, incomprehensible sound replaced all the noise of battle and the howl of the wind—a string of syllables with no meaning, sounds that signified the unmaking of the world. They tore at his ears and ripped at his mind, defying him to form sense or reason.

All around him, soldiers and barbarians fell to the earth, hands pressed to their ears, mouths wide in silent howls of agony. They parted like a subsiding flood, leaving only two figures standing in their wake.

One was Rienne—so close, no more than ten yards away—her face wrenched in pain, both hands clutching Maelstrom's hilt. Her mouth moved, forming words Gaven couldn't understand, as though their structure and meaning were her only defense against the sound of the Blasphemy.

The other figure was a tall man in bloodstained plate armor, twisting ivory horns rising from the brick-red skin of his brow. Blasphemy streamed from his mouth as he raised a flaming sword to the sky. His burning eyes fell on Rienne and anger twisted his face, and he strode toward her to cut her down.

The Blasphemer

The Blasphemer and his barbarian horde are an epic threat facing the world of Eberron. In *Dragon War,* Gaven and Rienne defeat the Blasphemer and halt his horde's advance across the Aundair River. In your campaign, though, it might fall to your player characters to stop Kathrik Mel before he breaks the Gatekeepers' seals and destroys the city of Fairhaven.

The Blasphemer Lore

History or Nature DC 20: From time to time, warlords arise in the Demon Wastes who manage to unite a handful of the normally warring Carrion Tribes under a single banner. Such alliances rarely last long, and never long enough to actually cross the Labyrinth and the Icehorn or Shadowcrag Mountains to threaten the Eldeen Reaches. They might pose a threat to the Ghaash'kala orcs of the Labyrinth, but present no danger to the civilized lands to the east.

Arcana DC 25: The Draconic Prophecy hints of a mighty war leader who could lead a terrible army of warriors, supported by dragons, to scour the earth. The Prophecy calls this leader the Blasphemer, suggesting that he is capable of unspeaking the words of creation that are said to have formed the world—or the words of the Prophecy itself.

Arcana or Nature DC 30: The elders of the Eldeen Reaches have legends of a fiendish creature who will come to break the seals of the Gatekeepers and unleash the madness of the Far Realm of Xoriat upon their land once again.

Kathrik Mel, the Blasphemer **Level 22 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling XP 4,150

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +16; low-light vision
Inspire Furor aura 1; when a minion ally adjacent to Kathrik Mel is reduced to 0 hit points, it can make a saving throw. If it saves, it takes no damage from the attack.
HP 205; **Bloodied** 102
AC 38; **Fortitude** 35; **Reflex** 33; **Will** 34
Resist fire 15
Speed 6

Bloodclaw (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Weapon**
+29 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 fire damage. *Effect:* The target is marked until the end of Kathrik Mel's next turn.

Bloodclaw Strike (opportunity action, when an adjacent marked target leaves a square or makes an attack that does not include Kathrik Mel; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Fear, Weapon**
+29 vs. AC; targets the triggering enemy; 2d10 + 6 fire damage and the target is immobilized and takes a -5 penalty on attack rolls until the end of its turn.

Unspeak Creation (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 5; Kathrik Mel speaks blasphemy that begins to erase the target from existence; +27 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 8 psychic damage and ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends).

Song of Blasphemy (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic, Zone**
Close burst 10; +27 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 8 psychic damage. The burst creates a zone of reality-rending words that lasts until the end of Kathrik Mel's next turn. A creature that enters or starts its turn in the zone takes 15 psychic damage. *Sustain minor:* The zone persists.

The Song Goes On (free, when Kathrik Mel saves against the stunned or dazed condition; at-will)
Kathrik Mel sustains his *song of blasphemy.*

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Supernal, Common, Draconic

Str 27 (+19)	**Dex** 21 (+16)	**Wis** 21 (+16)
Con 21 (+16)	**Int** 23 (+17)	**Cha** 25 (+18)

Equipment plate armor, Bloodclaw (longsword)

The Blasphemer's Tactics

Kathrik Mel is a warlord who leads his forces from behind, driving them forward with whips of flame if they advance too slowly against his foes. He uses his curved longsword, Bloodclaw, to cut down foes that draw too close to him—or minions that fail him. Only if he is seriously threatened by a worthy foe does he use *song of blasphemy,* since the horrid syllables spilling from his mouth harm his allies as much as his enemies.

The Blasphemer uses *unspeak creation* as a punishment for insubordination off the battlefield, but uses it in battle as he strides toward a significant enemy, starting the battle with an unfair advantage from range.

Defeating the Blasphemer

In *Dragon War,* Kathrik Mel was a virtually unstoppable opponent. When he faced Gaven, who wielded the prophesied power of the Storm Dragon, the nearly godlike power of the two epic opponents canceled out, actually tearing a rift in the fabric of creation. When Rienne faced the Blasphemer, her sword, Maelstrom, and the Blasphemer's own blade seemed content to fight each other without letting a single blow past to the ones who wielded them, conspiring together to contribute to the unmaking of the world. If you want, you can recreate the sense that the Blasphemer's death is a subject of the Prophecy just as his life is, making him impossible to kill except in a specific way.

The key is to ensure that the players have some way of knowing that the enemy they face is no ordinary foe and they'll need extraordinary means to defeat him. That might be as simple as a verse of Prophecy, though it took Rienne a long time to understand what the Prophecy meant in saying, "his end lies in the void, in the maelstrom that pulls him down to darkness."

However, the characters shouldn't feel like they're bound to the Prophecy. *The Draconic Prophecies,* ultimately, is about the characters writing their own destinies. Both Gaven and Rienne become playwright as well as player in the drama unfolding around them, and both achieve power by relinquishing the power they have learned to rely on. A confrontation with the Blasphemer can be a similarly dramatic moment for at least one player character, if that works with the story you and your player envision for that character. It might be a part of the character's epic destiny, or just a climactic moment in the character's long story in the campaign.

Encounters with the Blasphemer

Kathrik Mel marches with an innumerable horde of Carrion Tribe warriors. You might build an encounter similar to the ones described in *Dragon War,* where the player characters stand alongside defenders of the Eldeen Reaches and, later, Aundairian soldiers trying to prevent the Blasphemer's horde from crossing the river into Aundair. Thousands of Carrion Tribe barbarians clash with the defending armies in battles that take place "off-stage" from the actions of the characters, while the heroes mow down large numbers of Carrion Tribe degenerates (*Eberron Campaign Guide,* page 120) and face off against more significant threats before finally confronting the Blasphemer.

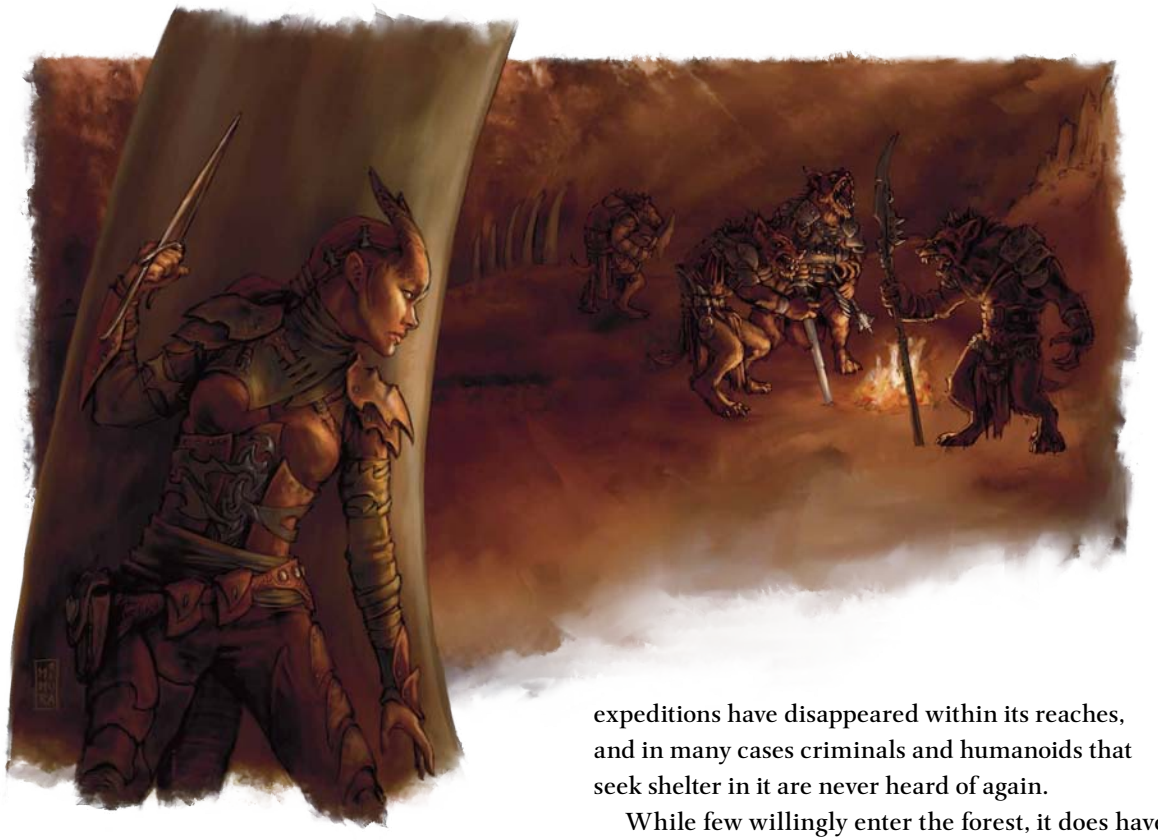
In *Dragon War,* Kathrik Mel sings his *song of blasphemy* in the thick of battle, slowly weakening the Gatekeepers' seals beneath the battlefield. However, you might want to build an adventure that takes him away from the press of battle, making it easier for the characters to confront him face to face. Perhaps he has to descend into an underground shrine and place his hands on the Gatekeepers' seal to unweave its magic, and the characters are charged with stopping him there. He would naturally bring a bodyguard of Carrion Tribe blessed champions (*ECG* page 120) with him into the shrine, or his retinue could include a rakshasa noble (*Monster Manual,* page 217), black slaad (*MM* 239), nothic mindblight (*Monster Manual 2,* page 168), or other appropriate creatures.

About the Author

James Wyatt is the D&D® Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. He was one of the designers of the *Eberron*® *Campaign Setting,* and is the author of several Eberron novels.

Wilderness Travel: Part 2

BY MIKE MEARLS
Illustration by Raven Mimura



In the previous installment of this series, I talked about how to use skill challenges to manage travel between two distant points. I'll summarize my advice here: Break the journey into a number of individual encounters and complexity 1 skill challenges. To add more depth to your world, keep track of each encounter's outcome and use that to shape the characters' future journeys into the wilds.

For this month's installment, I've designed a skill challenge to serve as an example. The skill challenge shows how you can set aside a region of your campaign, seed it with a few NPCs and locations, and let the PCs loose.

This challenge does not use a map, but you could easily place the sample encounters and destinations on a map and track the PCs' travels that way.

Through the Dreaming Forest

The Dreaming Forest lies along the eastern border of the Duchy of Seven Banners. Even from a distance, the forest radiates malevolence. The dense trees crowd together, creating a tightly woven canopy that allows no better than a murky gloom even under the noonday sun. At night, tittering laughter echoes through the woods and the glow of blue or yellow lantern light drifts between the trees.

The forest's sinister reputation deters intrusions by commoners and encourages it among bandits and criminals. Goblins and worse lurk at the forest's edge, and mercenaries and men-at-arms categorically refuse to enter the woods. Too many expeditions have disappeared within its reaches, and in many cases criminals and humanoids that seek shelter in it are never heard of again.

While few willingly enter the forest, it does have its lures for adventurers. According to the stories, the forest was once the domain of an eladrin lord name Kayereth. In the ancient days, Kayereth's realm was a verdant land where the fey danced under sun and moon in an endless revel. Fruit and berries grew throughout the forest, feeding all without need for work.

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Sadly, a realm as verdant and wondrous as Kayereth's could not survive unnoticed. A lich named Belos saw that, with the correct series of rituals, he could drain the life from the entire forest and make himself as mighty as a god. He and his army of zombies, skeletons, and wraiths descended upon the forest.

The fey fought the living dead, but Belos's power was so great that he first blotted out the sun and then laid a curse upon the land. Each fallen fey sprang back up as an undead beast. Soon, Kayereth and his followers were on the verge of defeat.

With his options exhausted, Kayereth invoked a terrible spell. He called forth the spirits of the living dead, drawing out their hunger and wrath. While many of the undead collapsed into rotting shells, Kayereth's spell did little to stem the tide of Belos's invading army. The lich's laughter echoed across the forest.

Belos soon learned the true nature of the spell. Kayereth did not seek to destroy the army. Instead, he merely sought hateful, ravenous spirits to cast within the trees of his beautiful forest. In an instant, the trees transformed to gnarled and twisted shapes. The canopy of the forest wove a sky blacker than midnight. The ground churned with roots that reach forth to grab the living dead, dragging them into the earth and entombing them forever.

None can say what happened next. The roll of history makes no further mention of Kayereth or Belos. The Dreaming Forest remains, though, a timeless memorial of their great battle. Its name is a monument to its lost beauty, for the druids believe that the forest's true nature slumbers within it, dreaming of the day when the curse that settled upon it can be broken.

Traveling Through the Dreaming Forest

Those who venture into the forest attest that it is an aptly named place. Glittering lights drift through the dense undergrowth, giving the impression that a figure carrying a light is just ahead, never in sight, with just a few trees obscuring it. Voices call a traveler's name, and sounds of laughter, crying, and a nearby revel echo among the trees. Emerging from the place is like waking from a dream.

When the characters enter the forest, they must resist the place's strange lures and maddening aura. Walking through the woods is more than simply putting one foot in front of the other. The entire place is saturated with fey magic. You can enter the forest at one edge, walk for an hour, and emerge a day's journey away from your starting point.

The characters must select a destination in the forest. Blundering through it without a map is a recipe for disaster, yet maps of the area are useless. Instead, the few adventurers and trackers who have ventured into the forest speak of specific signs to follow in the woods. To reach the Silver Tower, for example, one must follow the cackling laughter that sometimes echoes through the wood. Eventually, the laughter leads a traveler to the tower.

Following such directions is a complexity 1 skill challenge, using the moderate DC. One character can make a Nature or Perception check to chart a course. This check cannot be aided. If the characters fail the skill challenge, they emerge outside the forest and must try again. Otherwise, they arrive at their destination. The trip takes two hours per each skill check made as part of the challenge.

Destinations in the Forest

There are several places the characters might wish to visit in the forest.

The Caves of Glass: Somewhere in the forest is a tunnel dug into the side of a low hill. The earthen tunnel gives way to caves of black, reflective rock. The caves snake deep beneath the forest, and a number of evil fey, including spriggans and villainous gnomes, dwell here. They venture into the lands around the forest to raid and pillage, particularly for strong drink. The fey have designs on kidnapping a brewer and forcing him to make ale for them.

To find the caves of glass, one must seek out floating spheres of blue light and follow them.

The Unicorn Fountain: In the midst of the forest stands a fountain carved from white marble. The statue of a unicorn stands over the fountain, with pure water running like tears from its eyes into the fountain below. According to legend, anyone who bathes in the fountain is cured of any disease or curse they suffer. The PCs might seek this place to break such a curse, or perhaps they are hired by someone who needs its power.

To find the fountain, a traveler must close his eyes and listen carefully for the sound of rushing water. It is at best no louder than a whisper. Following the noise leads to the fountain.

Aphar's Tower: The gnome wizard Aphar dwells within the forest. His home is a wooden tower carried on a palanquin by four animated, stone statues. The statues follow a specific trail, but the strange magic in the woods shifts and warps its path. Aphar is an expert on the Feywild. He can send the PCs there via a *planar portal* ritual, which creates a teleportation circle in his abode.

Hazards in the Forest

Each time the characters make a check as part of the skill challenge, roll a d20. If the DM's d20 result exceeds the player's d20 roll for the skill check, the characters encounter something in the forest. Remember to compare only the die rolls; ignore all modifiers.

You can roll a d6 to determine the encounter, or you can pick one from the list below.

1. Buried Dead: The characters stumble across a number of skeletons clad in plate armor. All of them are half-buried in the forest's soil, while tendrils that sprout black flowers weave through the corpses and their rusted armor.

Each character must make a moderate DC Stealth check. If half or more of the characters fail, the undead rise up to attack. Create an encounter appropriate to the party's level.

2. The Spriggan: A number of spriggan and other evil fey dwell in the forest. They can move through the place with ease, and use it as a base to raid outlying farms. The spriggan leap from the trees to ambush the characters. Create an encounter appropriate to the party's level.

The spriggan are led by a bully clad in bronze boots named Clatter Heels. He fights from the rear, shrieking threats at the PCs while demanding that his followers fight to the death. He attempts to flee if the PCs defeat more than half his followers. If the PCs capture him, he begs for mercy and agrees to a truce. If released, he reorganizes the spriggan to attack again when the PCs stop.

3. Owlbears: A number of owlbears dwell in the forest. A hard DC Nature check allows a character to notice tracks and other signs that an owlbear is nearby. On a successful check, the PCs avoid this encounter. Otherwise, they face a mated pair of owlbears.

4. The Hag's Hut: Up ahead, the characters can see a small clearing in the wood. In the middle of the clearing stands a decrepit hut. This is the home of Varla the hag. Three songbirds, each encased in a cage of silver, sing within her hut. Make a level + 5 attack vs. Will against each PC. Any PC who is hit is ensorcelled by Varla and must obey her commands for one day. She puts them to work fetching fire wood, repairing her hut, and perhaps even hunting down a gang of goblins in the wood. She cannot give the PCs suicidal or dangerous orders.

Convincing Varla to break the spell is a complexity 1 skill challenge, using moderate DCs and Bluff, Intimidate, and Diplomacy as skills. If the PCs succeed, she releases her captives. Otherwise, she expects them to work for the full 24 hours.

5. The Court of Tears: As the PCs walk through the forest, a ghostly spectacle appears around them. Eladrin clad in the finery of nobles dance among the trees to the faint sound of mournful music. The dance is slow, and each eladrin cries quietly as he or she progresses through the dance. One eladrin stops before the PCs, bows, and asks them to join the revel.

The ghosts are of the courtiers from Kayereth's court. They dance endlessly, and they make no effort to hamper the PCs. If the characters can win the court's favor, however, then they can uncover the location of Kayereth's lost castle. Learning this information is a complexity 1 skill challenge. The characters can use Acrobatics to dance among the eladrin and Diplomacy to win their favor, with both skills using moderate DCs. Each character must make a check.

If the PCs fail, the eladrin are repulsed by their ill manners or fumbling dance, and they disappear. Otherwise, they accept the PCs as part of their court. The characters can ask for information about the forest, but they must take care to never mention the forest's current condition or the tragedy that befell it. The eladrin exist in utter denial. They believe that they dance in a sunny glen. As long as the PCs avoid this topic, they can learn much of the forest's history from the dancers. If reminded of their fate, the eladrin shriek and wail at their misery before disappearing into the forest, never to be seen again.

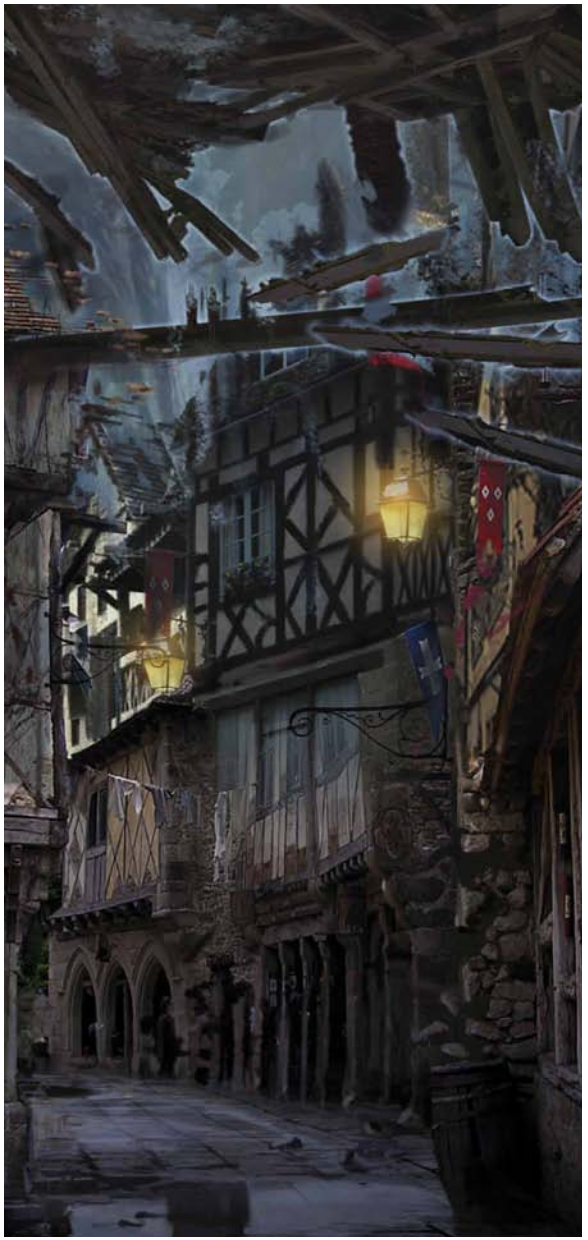
6. The Wall: As the PCs travel through the forest, they come across a ruined stone wall. A rusted gate hangs from one end of the wall, as though it were all that remained of a larger fortification. The wall was once a powerful item that allowed the eladrin to teleport across the forest. If the PCs pull the gate open (easy DC Strength check), walk through it, and close it behind them, they activate its power and gain a bonus success in reaching their destination. As they walk away from the gate, its subtle magic teleports them closer to their destination.

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Lead Developer for the Dungeons & Dragons® roleplaying game. His recent credits include H1: *Keep on the Shadowfell* and *Player's Handbook II* (v.3.5).

Save My Game
Convention Survival Guide

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND
illustration by Rob Alexander



Gen Con is less than two weeks away, and a number of you are getting ready to head out to Indy for four days of rock-till-you-drop gaming. Even if you're not about to make the trek, you probably wish you were going. If you're not one of these two groups, and you read this column, there may be something wrong with you.

All kidding aside, for those of you who have never attended one, game conventions are awesome. I attended my first gaming convention in the mid '80s. Called Wizardcon, it was held on the campus of Columbia University. While it would seem pretty lame by today's convention standards, it was like a wonderland for the teenage geek. There were booths filled with games and game accessories I had never seen or heard of before, more D&D than I could possibly play, a miniature painting contest, demos, and tournaments for games I had heard of but hadn't had the chance to play. Since then, I have been to dozens upon dozens of conventions, both for my job and as a fan, and I've had my hand in running quite a few of them.

At first, attending a convention may seem intimidating or overwhelming, but it shouldn't be. It's just a long weekend with new potential friends that already share your passion for games.

This month, I'm going to give you tips for saving your convention game experience from epic fail, starting with pre show and ending with post show. I've learned some of these tricks the hard way, others are just lucky practices I stumbled upon, and the rest are wisdom handed down to me from even more veteran convention goers.

So pack your dice bag and your favorite deodorant soap, we're going to the convention!

Equip Yourself for Adventure

The first time I went to Gen Con, I worked a double shift, took a cab to the airport, and jumped on a redeye to land in Milwaukee early Thursday morning. I'll never do that again. In my rush, I left a lot of things at home and had to replace them when I reached my destination. While getting a new toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorant, hairbrush, and just the right shampoo for my long, silky hair wasn't particularly expensive, it was frustrating and put me out of sorts for the first day of the show. Worse still, I forgot my itinerary, and the folks at the ticket desk had to help me figure out what flight I was on both on the way out and the way back.

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I should have remembered from my days as a Boy Scout that being prepared is the way to go. If you are traveling by air, gather all of your travel documents the day before you travel, put them in a folder (I have a number of clear plastic ones just for traveling), and keep them near your luggage. Pack your toiletries early (the last time you use them before you go), and double check for them when you finish packing your bags. More importantly for gamers, make sure you have all the game books and dice you need for the show. Even if you are planning on buying new dice at the show, bring a backup set. You never know how long it will take you to get to the dealers' hall.

If you are traveling by plane, also think about how much space you'll need to bring back new acquisitions. Typically I bring a duffel bag to serve as a dirty laundry hamper. It not only makes space in my main bag but keeps my new treasures from smelling like my day-old socks (pew!).

One last note about luggage—Airlines change the rules on checked baggage frequently. This year, many of them have been charging an annoying fee of $15, $20, or even $25 per bag unless you check-in your bags online before your flight. Make sure to check out your carrier's baggage rules, and take advantage of free online bag checks. Assuming a two-way ticket, that's $30 to $50 you could spend on games instead of shipping!

Going by car? Unless you're driving a sardine with wheels, you can go hog wild with your game purchases. Going by auto has its own hazards. Just about every big show, the RPGA is down a couple of DMs because a car broke down somewhere in Indiana, Kansas, or Ontario. Start every long car trip with a check of the fluids and tires, at the very least. If your vehicle has been acting up lately, wishes and prayers are no substitute for a checkup. It may seem expensive at the time, but it's a heck of a lot cheaper and less frustrating than spending your convention cash on a motel on the border of Hell, MI.

On the subject of hotels—always make reservations. Hotels near the convention will sell out. Finding a room at the last minute can be difficult if not impossible. If you're going to a large show, like Gen Con, make your reservations as early as possible. It's amazing how quickly nearby or cheap rooms sell out for that show. If you are considering going to Gen Con this year and haven't booked a room, you're probably out of luck. If you find one, you're either paying top dollar, sleeping in Ohio, or you called 15 seconds after someone else cancelled.

ALWAYS PREREGISTER

Always. Always. Always. The registration line of even the best-run convention is a test of patience. It doesn't help that you'll be chomping at the bit to get your game on.

A couple of years ago, I was a panelist for a local science fiction convention (which will not be named), and it took me four hours and trudging up and down five stories twice (by either crammed elevator or stairs) to get my VIP pass. And I was having an easier time than a lot of the folks who were trying to register for the show. While that kind of registration tomfoolery is thankfully rare, and Gen Con is a well-oiled machine, preregistration will still save you both time and frustration at the show. It's the only way to ensure you get into specific events (or at least to maximize your chances if the event is popular). Limiting the amount of time between walking through the doors of a show and spending your first action point is money.

You know what else is money? Money. Preregistration fees are typically 60% to 75% cheaper than entrance and event tickets at the door. Remember, every dollar you save on the necessities can go straight to the Wizards of the Coast booth ... err ... to your favorite retailer in the dealers' hall.

BE READY TO RUN

This section is for those of you heading out to Gen Con to run games. Whether you are running D&D for the RPGA, a favorite adventure of your own design in the open gaming area, or games for another company, remember that while you're running a game, you are the keeper of fun in your little corner of the con. The best way to ensure you are providing the most fun is to make sure you are having fun and you are prepared. The two are related. When I am properly prepared to run a game, I am more confident and have more fun.

First, thoroughly familiarize yourself with the adventure or event you're running. That doesn't mean read it once or twice. For years, the RPGA has done something called slot zeroes. That's where someone volunteers to run an adventure for a group of DMs long before the first time slot of the show. Slot zeroes have been run for a lot of reasons, but the most useful reason is so that DMs can experience the game from a player's perspective and discover through actual play what an adventure is like. This helps a DM improve the adventure or cater it on the fly for an atypical group of adventurers. The best convention

DMs are a lot like good home DMs. They tweak and change adventures to fit the tastes of their players. At a convention, they have a shorter time to figure out what those tastes might be. A slot zero is an excellent tool for figuring that out.

If you are running an adventure of your own design, you can still run a slot zero. Give the adventure to a friend and take a passive role in the play group, or sit back and watch a group play. You'll find all sorts of opportunities to improve your design or just get to know your adventure better.

Even after you are done playing or running a slot zero of an adventure, read it a couple more times. If there are things you're likely to forget, get out the highlighter. Know the adventure's ins and outs, ponder its weaknesses, and realize when you may need to adlib a little. Also, don't bite off more than you can chew. I don't run more than two different adventures at a convention, but I'll run each multiple times. I find it's better to be an adventure specialist than a generalist. I'm less likely to mix up details from different adventures, and practice makes perfect. By the time I'm on my third running of an adventure, I feel like I could do it in my sleep.

Lastly, make sure you have all the tools you need to run an adventure bundled in one place and ready to go. I keep my books, minis, adventures, and dice in a small travel bag that I can grab at a moment's notice. You'll be glad you did this the first time you're running late for a session, or when you bump into some old friends and want to run an impromptu game session in a hotel room after the game hall closes.

MAKE SURE TO TAKE TIME FOR YOU

Speaking of late-night game sessions, while they are fun, they can also be dangerous. Even the best prepared and knowledgeable DM or player can't bring her A-game on two hours of sleep. A good night of at least six hours of sleep is worth its weight in gold at a convention, especially if you're running games. Also give yourself time for meals and proper hygiene. You'll feel better, be more personable, and your friends and fellow gamers will thank you, even if it's with their inside voices. When I say meals, I don't mean chips, soda, or a slick bag of stale fast-food tacos. Get some real food at least once each day. A greasy carb crash can be just as debilitating as a poor night's sleep.

If you are running games or volunteering at a booth during the show, make sure to plan time do things you want to do. The important word is "plan." Don't assume or hope that this time will magically materialize in your schedule. You'll want to take a leisurely stroll through the dealers' room, play some games, and maybe even hit a panel or two. If you spend your entire show answering questions or demoing games, you're going to feel used, and afterward, you'll wonder how all the other fun parts of the show passed you by. The people you demo for may have paid for your badge, and you may want to impress them in the hope of gaining some freelance work or great swag, but they'll understand that you have other things you want to see at the show. Let them know. They're geeks too.

HOW MANY GAMERS CAN YOU FIT IN A 10 BY 10 ROOM?

The economy is rough right now, and it might be tempting to save money by cramming six or eight people into a two-bed room. Don't give in to that temptation. The fact that some of you will be sleeping on the floor (or the bathtub—don't laugh, it happens!) and the strange key swap games you'll need to play will only increase your stress. Compound this with the cacophony of snoring likely to occur each night and the fact that so many people sharing one shower will mean that at least one person will experience poor hygiene the entire weekend (and inflict it on all his roommates). Trust me; you'll pay, just not in cash.

Limit your hotel room sharing to four, and preferably four where a couple of people don't mind sharing a bed, either because they can be mature about it or they're a couple. Before the show starts, plan who is going to use the bathroom when. It may be an awkward discussion, but it's less awkward than an argument or bad feelings during the trip. Having reasonable expectations early saves sanity and limits tension during the busy weekend. Be ready to tolerate snoring and late-night entrances from all-night gamer buddies. How do you survive the noise? Earplugs, my friends, are cheap, easy to use, and far more comfortable than a sleepless night. Read the instructions and sleep peacefully.

LIMIT DRAMA

I've been to enough shows to know that good intentions can cave after just one late-night session. There will be one night where you get just two hours of sleep, and the guy sitting next to you during your 8 a.m. session will not shut up about his new *Magic* deck. The next thing you know, you have a headache that no aspirin or ibuprofen can quell. Unless you are an extreme extrovert, even the abundant sights and sounds of the con can be overwhelming, and you'll start to get aggravated by the smallest things. Your friends' playful joshing about your character's name, or their ribbing when you forget to place your mark on the dragon (dude, it's the only monster we're fighting!) will feel like the worst personal assault, and you'll want to unleash both barrels.

Stop. Get up. Get some water, a soda, maybe some coffee. Stretch your legs. Breathe some fresh air. Think about your favorite gaming moment—the first time you played D&D, the first time you scored a critical, or when ran your first adventure. Smile and remember that you and all the people around you came to have a good time. Then get back in there, roll some dice, and kill some monsters. Tell your friends that you're feeling out of sorts and that they could help by reminding you to mark. Tell the guy chattering about his *Magic* deck that it's been a long show, you're tired, and (no offence) but you need some quiet to think. Don't let things build up. Don't snap. Explain. Ask for help. It will all limit drama, and will help you, your friends, and the new acquaintances around the table to have a good time. That's what conventions are all about—good times!

POST MORTEM

Conventions are fun, but they're also draining. Everything said about preparing for your trip out to the convention site, goes double for coming home (including checking tire inflation and fluid levels again). The trip back is often exhausting, especially if you're like me and can't sleep in cars or planes, so you'll want to have your ducks in a row when you head out.

If you can, take off a day or even two after the show. You'll want some rest before getting back to work. It also helps to have a buffer in case you bring home a case of convention crud. Long hours of screaming dragonborn war crys, too little sleep, and too much junk food can wear down your immune system, which means those small colds your body fights off every week without you even knowing about them can gain a foothold when you finally slow down. Getting enough rest, drinking plenty of liquids, and dosing up on vitamin C (I prefer oranges and grapefruits, but supplements work too) will go a long way toward reducing your chance of contracting con crud.

While you are taking time off, reflect on the show. Think about what was awesome and the parts you would rather do over. Write them down, and put those notes where you can find them before committing yourself to the next show. Use that as a guide on how you can increase your fun and limit the annoyances at the next convention. Like anything else, practice makes perfect. If you are doing it right, each show you go to will be more fun than the one before it.

That was a longer column than usual, so I am going to skip the letters this month, but they'll be back next month.

Speaking of letters, those of you going to Gen Con should feel free to drop me a line and share your greatest D&D highlight of this year's show. I would love to share a few in next month's column! If you have other convention survival tips to share, feel free to send those, too.

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when Stephen Radney-MacFarland came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.
Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D where he doesn't create the traps... he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Episode 18: Building-Block Adventure Design

BY JAMES WYATT
illustration by Wayne England

You might have noticed that this installment of Dungeoncraft is late. Blame Gen Con, and all the preparation that went into my part of what I thought was a very successful show. My apologies to those of you who've been waiting on the edge of your seat. One lesson I've brought back with me from Gen Con is that a lot of you are reading this column, enjoying it, and actually getting useful information and inspiration out of it. That's great for me to hear.

I ran a couple of seminars at Gen Con, including one on Saturday called, "I Want to Be a D&D Dungeon Master!" Aimed specifically at players making their first forays behind the DM screen, it covered a wide range of topics, from how to find players and a place to play to the cool events scheduled for the next D&D Game Day, celebrating the launch of *Dungeon Master's Guide* 2. One of the ideas that came out of it, though, was the idea of a sort of building-block approach to adventure creation.

The idea came out of a story I actually told several times over the course of the weekend. It's about my son, the now-12-year-old who's immortalized in the story on page 28 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* and how he became a Dungeon Master.

I distinctly remember driving him to kindergarten one day as he played with the old tiles from the *D&D Miniatures* game, assembling them into rooms and populating those rooms with monsters. Years later, when I brought home the special DM screen that our friends at Gale Force 9 made to celebrate the launch of 4th Edition, my son decided he wanted to sit behind it, and he ran a game or two. But the product that tipped him over the edge and turned him into a full-fledged adventure designer, storyteller, and Dungeon Master was *Dungeon Delve.*

If you're not familiar with the book . . . well, first of all, check it out. It's quite possibly the harried DM's best friend, chock full of adventures at every level designed to fill an evening of play when you're un- or under-prepared. Each little delve consists of three encounters, escalating up in danger. It also includes suggestions and ideas for expanding the adventures and continuing the action, but each delve is self-contained.

When I brought that book home, my son's imagination lit up. He had no interest in playing or running any of the delves in the book, though. No, he wanted

to write his own delves, and he promptly did. That first weekend, he ran my wife and me through three delves he created himself (with some help from me in scaling monster levels).

In the first delve, the villain at the climax (that third encounter) was an evil mage. In the second, we fought the ghost of that same mage. In the third, we fought a skull lord that somehow incorporated both the mage and his ghost into a three-headed undead monstrosity.

And that's the point of this story. My 12-year-old taught me a lesson about adventure design. None of his delves had deep, rich story to them. They all consisted of straightforward combat encounters building toward a climax. (His later delves began to incorporate incredibly evocative story elements like the ghost whose tears flowed down and formed a gleaming sword just as she leaped to attack us, which I attribute to the inspiration of editor/developer Jeremy Crawford as his sometime DM.) But by the time we'd played through three of the delves, we did feel like we'd experienced a story, just because they were connected in an interesting way.

To me, this suggests a really simple method of adventure creation that I think of as similar to the plastic building blocks that happen to be another of my son's passions. Take a block (an encounter). Snap three blocks together to form a delve. Do that three times, then snap the three delves together into an adventure. You've got nine encounters and three minor quests. If you follow the delve format strictly, starting with an encounter of the characters' level and adding one level for each successive encounter, that's more than enough adventure for the characters to gain a level. Spread a level's worth of treasure parcels out among the three delves (concentrating on the climactic encounter of each delve), and you're ready to go.

To my mind, this makes adventure design much less daunting. A dungeon complex with a dozen rooms is hard to draw and can be pretty complex. A delve in three rooms? I can (and my son did) do that on a single poster map from a published adventure. The three delves can be completely separate locations, or they can be physically linked together. The only trick is finding the links that make the three delves feel like a single story.

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Forging the Links

There's magic in the number three. (Is anyone reading this old enough to remember the Schoolhouse Rock song about three?) It's a number so rich with mythic resonance that it's pretty easy to think of three things that could form the three delves in an adventure:

✦ Recover three magic items (a rod, crown, and scepter, or three rings), or three pieces of a shattered relic.

✦ Kill three hags, three ogres, or the three shadar-kai who lead the bandits in Raven Roost.

✦ Visit three fanes and perform a ritual to reconsecrate them. (The 3rd Edition *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* included a theme like this.) Perhaps the three fanes are dedicated to related gods that appear in triads: the gods of the Celestial Mountain (Bahamut, Moradin, and Kord), the gods of the Bright City (Pelor, Erathis, and Ioun), the gods of the roads and wilds (Avandra, Melora, and Sehanine), the three Fates (maiden Avandra, matron Ioun, and the Raven Queen, the crone), the gods of Arkhosia (Kord, Erathis, and Ioun), or even the three elven gods (Corellon, Sehanine, and Lolth).

✦ Visit three locations—one in the world, one in the Shadowfell, and one in the Feywild. Or one in the world, one in the Astral Sea, and one in the Elemental Chaos. Even the structure of the universe supports this threefold structure.

You can use links among the three locations, the three climactic villains, or the objects of the three quests:

✦ Your locations could be parallel locations in three different planes of existence—which might even let you use the same map three times, with only minor changes to reflect the planar environment. Or they could be three similar outposts of an ancient kingdom, three shrines to the same or related gods, or watchtowers on the peaks of three mountains.

✦ Your villains might be all of the same kind, or they might be the same individual in three different states (as in my son's creation). They might be three agents of the same greater lord (who will be a villain in a later adventure)—or two lieutenants and

the master himself. They might be three otherwise unrelated monsters each infected by a shard of corruption that produces a similar pattern of behavior in each one.

✦ The heroes might quest after the three items in a set, three pieces of a broken item, or three components for crafting a unique item. They might have to carry the same message to three different people. They might have to deal with the repercussions of the same event in three different places. They might have to secure the aid of three disparate groups to accomplish a greater quest. They might have to save or protect the baron's three sons.

Even as I write these ideas down, I'm finding that many of them lead me to larger adventure ideas, and that's what makes this model of adventure design so intriguing to me. I might throw together a quick delve when I'm strapped for time (as I so often seem to be). That gives me the opportunity to create two linked delves to go with it, but that also opens up opportunities for me to build on the story I'm weaving in those delves, and build a larger adventure that grows from that simple story.

Theory in Practice

Next time I get this group together to play, I'm going to need to be ready to send them on their next adventure, as they'll finish up *Khyber's Harvest* after just one more encounter. My campaign arc suggests that they should either deal with Marti Veran and her ambitious son at this point, or else plant seeds for their imminent visit to Tower Watch. Let's see if I can sketch out a building-block series of delves to fill up that last level before they head to Tower Watch.

The simplest thing to do is follow up on a theme I decided on after the early adventure in which the characters ended up reconsecrating an altar to Ioun. I've put another altar at the end of *Khyber's Harvest.* I can easily create three little dungeon delves where the goal of each one is to find another altar—part of the ancient seals that held the Speaker in Dreams imprisoned—and restore its magic to prevent further Far Realms incursion. Each delve will climax in a fight against aberrant creatures with a concurrent skill challenge to deal with the altar in that room.

Each delve will climax in a fight against aberrant creatures with a concurrent skill challenge to deal with the altar in that room.

The only trick will be making these encounters sufficiently different from each other so that the players don't get bored.

The nice thing about the short delve format, too, is that it sends the characters into Greenbrier Chasm three times, presumably on something like three successive days. That lets some time pass in the village, and Elder Veran's grandson could put his plans in place while the characters are down in the chasm. So there's a story link connecting the three delves, as well as a story unfolding back in town on their three return trips.

With that structure in place, the actual job of building the delves is pretty simple. I'll find good maps or build them with Dungeon Tiles, pick appropriate monsters with an aberrant twist (looking for some variety from the goblins, dolgaunts, and dolgrims that have occupied so much of the first two levels of play), and make sure to spread out treasure parcels. Another nice advantage of the three delves is that I can give each one a different flavor and atmosphere—different kinds of monsters (I'm tentatively thinking bullywugs, myconids, and kenku, leaning pretty heavily on *Monster Manual 2*), a different style of cavern or dungeon, and an altar to a different god at the end of it.

Of course, I'll also be actively looking for more inspiration from my son. Don't tell my boss, but it's possible he's the most creative one in the family.

About the Author

James Wyatt is the D&D® Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide®*. He was one of the designers of the *Eberron® Campaign Setting* and is the author of several *Eberron* novels.